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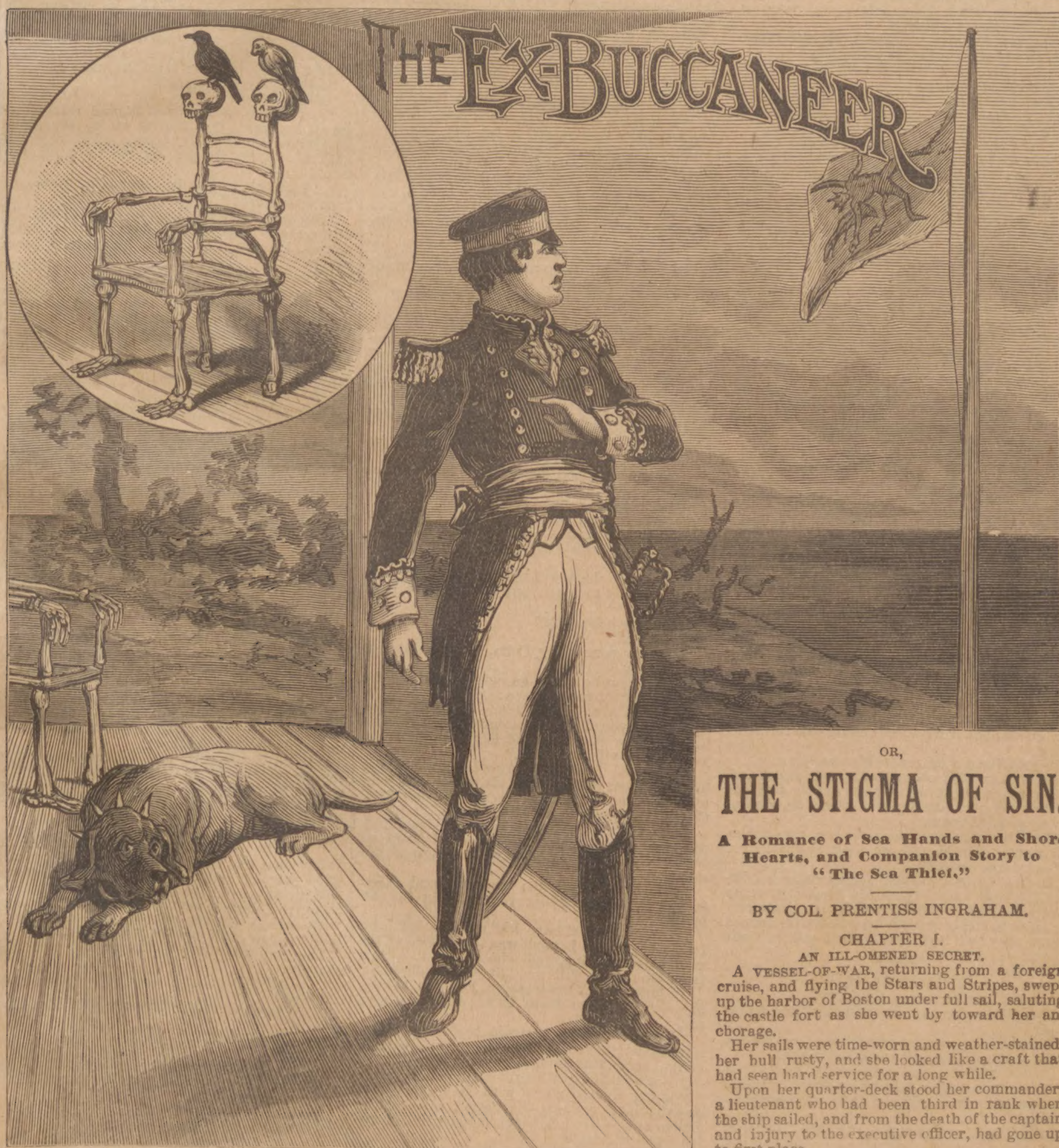
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THE SEA BRIGAND BEHELD THE FAC-SIMILE OF THE FIGUREHEAD ON HIS NEW VESSEL—AN EVIL SPIRIT.

OR, THE STIGMA OF SIN.

A Romance of Sea Hands and Shore
Hearts, and Companion Story to
"The Sea Thief."

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

CHAPTER I.

AN ILL-OMENED SECRET.

A VESSEL-OF-WAR, returning from a foreign cruise, and flying the Stars and Stripes, swept up the harbor of Boston under full sail, saluting the castle fort as she went by toward her anchorage.

Her sails were time-worn and weather-stained, her hull rusty, and she looked like a craft that had seen hard service for a long while.

Upon her quarter-deck stood her commander, a lieutenant who had been third in rank when the ship sailed, and from the death of the captain and injury to the executive officer, had gone up to first place.

His was a handsome, sun-browned face, stern, yet not passionate, and about his mouth was an

expression constantly hovering which if analyzed might be set down as nervousness.

As he turned his glass upon the villa-clad shores of Boston Bay he muttered to himself:

"They sent me away under a cloud, and where I had commanded with honor, reduced me to serve under others, and now I come back acting captain of this fine ship.

"Will they do justly by me now, or will the Government still keep me under another's command?"

"Not if I can find out the truth about that treasure, for I can hardly believe that she really has accomplished what I failed to do.

"Yet it must be so— Ah! can that be my home?"

His glass was leveled upon a lordly mansion that crowned the ridge overlooking the harbor and bay.

It was a grand home, with a tower and broad piazza, spacious wings and splendid grounds encircling the mansion.

"It certainly is where my pretty home stood; but that is a mansion fit for a prince.

"She wrote me that she was making improvements, but that surpasses my wildest expectations.

"Yes, she has gotten that treasure, she has accomplished what I failed to do.

"My God! what did not that ill-omened treasure cost me in torment of mind, in tragedies forced upon me, in deeds demanded of me.

"It is appalling to recall all that I have suffered since I went wrong, betrayed the trust placed in me by the man to whom I owed my life, and who when dying left me a generous share of his pirate treasure.

"But she tempted me and I fell, and bitter has been my agony of mind since then."

His face had paled under his emotion and his lip quivered nervously.

"See, Captain Hartwell, does not that mansion stand where your pretty house once did?" said a junior officer approaching him politely.

"Yes, Vancouver, it is still my home, which my wife has improved," and as though wishing to drop the subject, Lieutenant Hartwell, called captain by courtesy, at once gave orders to get the vessel ready for anchoring.

Half an hour after the ship anchored off the town, and having reported his return to the proper authorities, Captain Hartwell left his vessel in command of the next officer in rank and made his way homeward.

It was in the evening when he arrived, and his home was brightly illuminated, for his wife was entertaining a number of guests at dinner as was her wont.

He found his grounds beautifully laid out, his mansion enlarged to five times its original size, with turrets and a tower, piazzas and balconies, and a servant in livery met him at the door.

There was a goodly company present and they were the most distinguished people of the town, an admiral, a general, a judge and others, leaders in society.

The returned sailor was almost bewildered, and muttered to himself:

"And that pirate treasure has done all this?"

"Oh! what a transformation scene."

His wife, a beautiful, queenly woman of thirty, received him as though he had just returned from down-town, or was one of her guests.

"I am really glad you have come to-night, Hartwell, for you will meet some charming people.

"I was hardly expecting you so soon, though I knew that you had been ordered home—here is Celeste."

Celeste, a vision of beauty verging upon her teens, sprung into her father's arms with a glad welcome and the strong man trembled violently as he pressed her to his heart.

It was a delightful evening for the hostess and her guests, but a wretched one for the returned sailor.

He felt like a stranger in his own home.

About him was every luxury, elegance, and the appearance of unlimited wealth, and his mistress reigned like a queen where he was retiring and ill at ease.

His little daughter indeed seemed rejoiced at his return and he was at least happy in her affection and welcome.

At last the distinguished guests departed, little Celeste said good-night, the liveried servants closed the lordly mansion and the sea rover had a chance to talk over with his wife the ill-omened secret they had long held locked within their hearts.

CHAPTER II.

THE FATAL LEGACY.

MRS. HARTWELL was a woman with a will of iron.

With it she possessed wondrous grace of form and beauty of face, wit and intelligence.

She swayed men and woman alike, and entertained with a lavish hospitality which gave her pre-eminence in the City of Boston's fashionable circle.

It had not been ever thus, for Mrs. Hartwell, as a young girl, had married a man she believed would be heir to large wealth, but it had not come through expected inheritance.

Harold Hartwell, then a young naval officer,

had believed he was catching an heiress as well as a beauty.

He loved his wife, but she loved herself too well to venture deep affection upon any other than her lovely child.

The pair had lived comfortably, no more.

Then came the loss of Hartwell's brig in a hurricane in the Bahamas, and the saving of himself and crew by the pluck of a merchant captain, Claude Cassiday.

The act gained for the young skipper a lieutenantancy in the navy, and he and Harold Hartwell became brother officers upon the same vessel, for, though not censured for the loss of his vessel, Lieutenant Hartwell was not placed in command again.

During his merchant service among the West Indies, a deep affliction had fallen upon Claude Cassiday, in the loss of his little boy, who had drifted away one day when his father's schooner was becalmed among the Bahamas.

Whether his son was dead, or the captive of buccaneers, Claude Cassiday did not know, and this cast a gloom upon his life which lingered until his dying day.

He lost his life in Mexico one day, when with Lieutenant Hartwell and a party of women they had landed to fill their water-casks, and were attacked by Mexican bandits.

When wounded, Claude Cassiday had told to his brother officer a secret of a private treasure he had found among the Bahamas, and securely hidden upon an island, to go after it at a future day.

Claude Cassiday died, leaving the private treasure as a legacy to his friend, Hartwell, and his own wife and little daughter.

With this explanation I can now return to the night when Harold Hartwell returned home.

He awaited in the library a moment for an interview with his wife, and she seemed at first anxious to avoid it.

But seeing that she must explain the situation, she first had the servants close the house and retire, sent little Celeste off to her bed, and then almost defiantly faced her husband as she threw herself into an easy-chair.

She saw that he wore a more determined look than she had ever seen on his face before, and she knew that though she ruled him he was not a man to drive too far, beyond his forbearance.

"Well, Celia?" he said calmly.

"Do you wish to keep me awake telling me of your cruise?" she asked.

"No, I wish to know what all this means?"

"All what?"

"This dwelling in a mansion which has had some fifteen to twenty thousand dollars improvements upon it since I left, thousands spent in furniture, silver and the improvement of the grounds, not to speak of half a dozen liveried servants and a dinner which has cost you a hundred or more, and which I heard to-night was a frequent occurrence here at my house?"

"Well, as you have blocked out your desire for information, I will give you the facts.

"I wrote you that I had secured the treasure which you failed to get."

"Yes, it startled me."

"Doubtless, and pleased you, as I sent you quite a liberal sum which would enable you to keep up a lavish style with your brother officers."

"What does the world think of all this?"

"Oh, simply that you and I both have been left legacies."

"Can they believe it?"

"They do."

"I'll hear your story, Celia, for you interest me intensely."

She saw that he was in an ugly humor and she was one to fight back, so she said:

"Well, in a nutshell, Claude Cassiday, when dying, told you of pirate treasure hidden upon an island of the Bahamas and left it conjointly to you and his wife and child."

"Yes, and I pledged my word to a dying brother officer to carry out his wishes, and you, temptress, made me keep the secret from Mrs. Cassiday and seek to get all for myself."

"Yes, for they were not in want, Mrs. Cassiday and her daughter, and we had lived on hope of riches so long to have only despair instead."

"You went after the treasure and failed to get it, nearly losing your life in the attempt."

"Yes, and would have lost my life but for a boy, a boy whom I found was the lost son of the man I was robbing, and who sought to escape from the pirates with me, but whom I deserted."

"I failed to get the treasure, yes, and to keep my secret, put to death those who went with me."

"I returned home to again be driven by you to make another effort, and again I failed and again I took other lives to keep my secret."

"I came home and sought a command."

"It was given me, and with the fleetest craft and the finest crew in the navy I sailed to the Bahamas and lost my vessel, taken from me by Kent the Buccaneer."

"Then I was reduced to a junior in command and ordered off on a cruise, but now return in command of the vessel through the death of my

captain and the illness of the next in rank over me."

"Didn't poison your captain and lay up your senior lieutenant did you, Hartwell?" asked the woman wickedly.

He paid no attention to her cruel words but continued:

"I am here now to find my wife living like a princess, with her liveried servants, her horses and carriages, and displaying a fortune in silver upon her table, a king's ransom in gems upon her person, and she coolly tells me she has gotten the treasure all my skill, courage and determination failed to obtain."

"Now, how was it, I ask you, Celia?"

The woman laughed wickedly and replied:

"I will tell you."

CHAPTER III.

THE WOMAN'S WAY.

"You see, Hartwell," said Mrs. Hartwell serenely, "your failures to get the treasure left me poor. I despise poverty and poor people; I love gold and the rich. I made up my mind that I would accomplish what you had failed to do!"

"But the maps and charts?"

"That was easy enough for I am something of a draughtswoman, you know, and had often helped you with your work."

"Having your charts, maps and directions of the Treasure Island and how to get it, for you left them in my keeping, I simply made exact copies."

"Then I went into deep black and so heavily veiled that no one would know me, to Gripstein the Jew money-lender and got what I needed upon my jewels, also chartering a vessel he owned which was built as a yacht for a Cuban planter but never taken from the builders."

"I then played possum."

"Played what?"

"In other words I played ill, and refused to see all company, sent Celeste off to boarding-school and then secretly shipped upon the yacht with a capable skipper and half a dozen seamen."

"All of whom will be demanding money to keep your secret."

"My dear Hartwell, I am no fool, for not one of them ever saw me unveiled, and more, they did not know that I went in search of a treasure."

"You did not fool them?"

"Indeed I did most cleverly, for I put a coffin on the yacht, told them I was going to get the body of my lover, buried there, and when I found the treasure, which was in a private burying ground you know, I opened the grave, put the riches in the coffin, and it was borne back to the yacht and placed in my cabin."

"The crew thought I was peculiar of course, but they changed their minds when I came ashore with my two trunks, from which I had taken everything and thrown out of the cabin windows, placing in them the booty, and leaving an empty casket."

"On the way out we were overhauled by Kent the Buccaneer and all I can say for him is that he is a gentleman."

"A gentleman pirate!" answered Hartwell.

"So I said and mean, for he gave me his sympathy, told me where some American seamen had been wrecked and buried, and allowed me to go upon my way with regrets at having detained me."

"And then?"

"Oh, then I got the treasure, landed with my trunks, took the New York stage and returning home pretended to be greatly benefited by my going away for my health."

"I went to Gripstein the money-lender, veiled as before, got money for my jewels when I needed wealth, and added to our home which I now called Overlook Manor."

"I refurnished it, and the massive silver service found with the treasure, is the admiration of every one, while women are wild with envy over my different sets of superb jewels."

"And thus has all the treasure gone?"

"Don't be silly, Hartwell, for not one-fifth of it has gone, and as I have come to be a pretty good judge of gems, I have concluded that one can invest enough to pay a handsome income and give Celeste a very large marriage portion, with enough left for our old age—ugh! how I hate to grow old!" and the woman shuddered.

The man was silent a moment and then said sharply:

"Celia!"

"Yes."

"We must share this treasure with Mrs. Cassiday."

"Not a dollar of it."

"Yes."

"I say no, and if you dare to say such a thing again I will simply report you as a murderer to the naval authorities."

The man winced and said:

"Where is this treasure?"

"I will show you."

She arose and went to a panel in the wall, which was carved handsomely as others were.

Touching a secret spring the panel opened, revealing a secret closet, iron-lined.

The man started at what he beheld, for a fortune, indeed, was before him, one of which he had not dreamed.

There were cases of gems, buckskin bags of gems of all kinds, bars of gold and of silver, with jewelry rich and rare, all the stealing of sea thieves, all costing human lives and anguish untold.

Like one spell-bound he stood before the riches, his eyes sparkling. But suddenly his face became gloomy and he said in a low, earnest tone:

"Celia, there is something that I have to say now to you."

CHAPTER IV.

A HERO IN IRONS.

THE serious aspect of her husband told Mrs. Hartwell that he had something of importance to communicate.

So she closed the treasure-closet and removed her seat, unmindful that the hour was long past midnight.

"I suggested," began Captain Hartwell slowly, "that we should share this treasure with the Cassidays."

"And I say no."

"It would relieve my conscience, and—"

"Your conscience," sneered the woman.

"I admit it is a hard one, but I can stand the human lives that treasure has caused me to sacrifice, far better than I can robbing the women and children of Claude Cassiday to whom, when he was dying, I gave my pledge of honor to obey his request."

"Not a dollar shall they have, for the widow is in comfortable circumstances, and the son is an officer of the navy."

"It is of that boy I wish to speak, Celia."

"Well?" and the woman tossed her head viciously.

"You know how I deserted him when the pirates captured me and took me to their island?"

"Yes."

"When a second time I went after the treasure I picked the boy up at sea, for he had escaped from the pirate isle."

"I thought he was an officer?"

"Granted that he was a boy-lieutenant, he yet was anxious to escape from them and was a pirate because he could not help himself."

"He aided my escape to go with me, and as I left him he escaped when he could."

"I picked him up, as I said, at sea, but I dared not let him return with me, knowing all, so I landed with him on an island and again deserted him."

"He was found by his captain, Kent the Buccaneer, and taken back to the stronghold, and it seems that Providence ordained a strange future for him."

"He swam out at night to a brig-of-war and piloted her into the pirate stronghold."

"He received for this a midshipman's berth in the navy and rendered such good service that he won high praise."

"Then he was sent off on a long cruise in Eastern seas, and as his brother middies learned that he had been a pirate they persecuted him beyond all endurance and at last several duels were the result ashore in Egypt."

"He spared his foes, defeating them with a rapier, but one demanded pistols and vowed to kill him."

"The result was that Midshipman Claude Cassiday was sent home in irons for killing a brother officer and just as he had been made acting lieutenant of a brig that was to remain abroad on a cruise for some time longer."

"Instead he is now in irons on a vessel expected daily in port, and will be tried for his life."

"Well?"

"I believe that the trial will not go hard with one who has proven himself such a hero though a boy in years."

"If he is dismissed the service, his gallant career ends in disgrace and he will have a clouded life before him."

"If he is not punished, as he will be at home and I will be ordered on duty again at no distant day, he may be sent to my vessel."

"Yes."

"Should he even not be ordered under my command, as he lives here he will be very likely to cross my path and recognize me."

"You were under an assumed name when you went after the treasure."

"True; but that boy is no fool, and such a short time has passed since we met, only three years or so, he will recognize me."

"It is your own cowardly fears, Hartwell, for he will never connect the skipper of a small schooner, treasure-hunting in the Bahamas, with Captain Harold Hartwell, of the navy."

"I fear that he will, I admit, whether he is dismissed the service or retained in it, whether he sails under my command or remains here."

"He is Lieutenant Claude Cassiday's son, and heir to the treasure in yonder closet."

"He has reason to hate me with the deepest venom, and the eyes of hatred remember well."

"Should he recognize me, then I am at his

mercy, and he will know how we got our riches."

"Well, what would you do?"

"Go to him and confess my sin, turning over so him his share of the legacy left by his father."

"If you do he will accept the gold, and all will be well."

"Yes, and my conscience will be relieved."

"A fig for your conscience, Hartwell; but first let me say to you, that should you do such a thing as you suggest, make such a fool of yourself as to throw yourself upon the mercy of a boy, and be forgiven by him, you will rob me of my riches, my child of her inheritance, and this I will not submit to."

"What will you do, Celia, to prevent?"

"If you rob me, by confessing all to that boy, then I shall have no love of life in poverty."

"But we will still have much to call our own."

"I must have all or none, and if you betray me for his sake, then shall I tell the story to the Secretary of the Navy of your crimes to get that treasure, and while young Claude Cassiday enjoys the riches I got, you will go to a felon's grave and leave a curse upon your name and your child."

"Now do as you deem best, Hartwell."

CHAPTER V.

AN EX-BUCCANEER.

THE home of the Cassidays was in striking contrast to that of the Hartwells.

Where the latter had a grand mansion, surrounded with ornamental grounds and every appearance of luxury, the former lived in a neat little cottage toward the end of the ridge drive.

There was a pretty flower plot, a vegetable garden and a stable in the rear, with a cow and staid old horse, but all looked neat and comfortable.

Mrs. Cassiday's income was not large, coming from several partnerships her husband had held in merchant craft, but she made it go a long way and she owned her home and did not owe a dollar.

Much sorrow had her life known, for when Claude Cassiday had been her first and only love she had been very nearly forced into a marriage with Kent Curtis, a wild young man who afterward went to the bad, for her sailor lover had returned from sea in time to save her from the sacrifice, for she had been sacrificing herself to save her father from ruin.

Her father, merchant Marcy, was a rich man then, or had been; but becoming involved he had hoped to extricate himself by marrying his only child to Kent Curtis who was supposed to be heir to a large fortune.

But the crash came and both the merchants Marcy and Curtis were found to be bankrupt.

Marrying the man she loved she had never regretted it, for he was becoming prosperous in his affairs when the first terrible blow came in the loss of their son, little Claude.

Appointed to the navy for meritorious service Claude Cassiday lost his life in Mexico and the widow and her little daughter were left alone.

But joy came to them when one day a handsome youth, clad in uniform entered the cottage and announced himself as the lost Claude, and that having saved a brig-of-war from destruction by being her pilot, he had been given a midshipman's berth in Uncle Sam's navy.

And more, he told his story of how he had been picked up by Kent the Buccaneer and made his *protege*, an honor he had sought to put an end to as soon as he could do so.

Away on a long cruise, after a short stay at home had the young midshipman gone, and then the vessel commanded by Captain Hartwell brought home the news, which soon spread over the city that young Claude Cassiday had killed a superior officer in a duel, while the vessel on which they served was on a foreign station, and that his ship was coming home bringing him in irons.

Following Hartwell's ship into port came the vessel-of-war bearing the young prisoner, and though a bitter blow to his mother and sister they could do nothing to aid him.

He was in the hands of his judges and they must condemn or clear him.

The court-martial soon convened and Claude Cassiday was tried for the crime with which he was charged.

Perhaps it was his handsome face and manly bearing, perhaps his frank yet modest way of putting his case, and it may have been that his past life was taken into consideration, his having been almost reared upon the deck of a pirate vessel.

Then too it might have been his splendid heroism, in having swum out from the pirate island at night in a storm to pilot a vessel-of-war to safety, and thus through his efforts the buccaneer stronghold and vessel were captured, that influenced the members of the court-martial—I say that all these things might have had their weight, along with the fact that the youth was called the "Pirate Middy," and persecuted by his fellows, but certain it was that he was simply reprimanded and his punishment

was to again be sent away on foreign service for three years.

Glad were his mother and sister that it was no worse, and they bade him farewell with almost pleasure, for they had dreaded the worst.

And happy indeed was Lieutenant Hartwell that the youth was sent away and had no chance to see him and thus put his powers of memory to the test.

"I am safe at least until he again crosses my path, and perhaps in that time he may have forgotten," mused Harold Hartwell, and he devoted himself to getting what pleasure he could out of his leave at home, his whole life now becoming wrapped up in his beautiful daughter, Celeste, rapidly advancing toward maidenhood.

In the grand entertainments of his wife he took little interest, and he readily discovered that it was no way to rear his daughter, amid a whirl of dissipation and social gayeties that must soon break her down, and which he could readily see were beginning to tell upon his wife.

"I must put an end to this," he said to himself, one day while musing over his life, for even at his own house there was no rest for himself or others, for Mrs. Hartwell had gone "society mad."

And away over the seas, to serve out his sentence of exile on foreign service for three long years, sailed the young midshipman, the gallant Ex-Buccaneer, who found even upon his new service there were those jealous of him and anxious to make life a burden to him.

CHAPTER VI.

AT BAY.

HAROLD HARTWELL pondered more and more over the reckless pace at which his wife was going.

He went into a jeweler's and priced gems of all kinds, until he got an idea of the value of precious stones of different varieties.

Then he learned the value by weight of gold and silver, and returning home decided to make an estimate of his wealth, as far as the treasure on hand was concerned.

He also made a careful estimate of the expenses per month of the household, according to the way in which his wife was living.

With this data he began his valuation of the treasure, dividing it in parcels most convenient for counting and handling for disposal.

At the valuation he made of the treasure on hand, he decided that his wife had just six years to live in her extravagant way, excluding the jewels she had taken for her own adornment, the massive silver service for her table, also drawn from the treasure and their home.

"In ten years, or less, we will be beggars, falling back upon my own pay for a living," he muttered. "This must stop, and there is but one way to do it, for Celia is spending over twelve thousand a year as she now lives."

"It must stop."

A few days after Harold Hartwell left home on what he called a pleasure trip.

When Mrs. Hartwell sought for the key of the treasure closet it was gone, but she suspected nothing of her husband's intention, and as he had free access to its secret hiding-place as well as herself, she supposed he had carried it away in his pocket.

So the days passed until his return and she asked after a formal greeting, for there was no show of affection between these two:

"Have you the key of the Secret Closet, Hartwell?"

"Yes."

"You should have left it with me, in case an accident happened to you, for to have had the closet opened by force would have betrayed my secret."

"No, there is nothing in it."

Mrs. Hartwell sprung to her feet with a startled cry, while she gasped:

"Harold Hartwell, what do you mean?"

"Be calm and I will tell you."

His manner impressed her and she sunk silently into a chair.

"I figured upon the cost of your living and here is what it costs."

He handed her a slip of paper and continued:

"Beneath that you find the valuation *in toto* of the treasure, gold and silver bullion, jewelry, silver plate and gems."

"I made my own estimate, and I found I was not far wrong, only a few thousands under the value at a sale."

"Now you see that would give you but six years to keep up such extravagance, when you would fall back upon the jewels you took for yourself, then the home and furniture and next, and last, my pay, which would be within ten years, when Celeste our daughter would be scarcely over the threshold of womanhood."

"Now I decided to act, to save you, to save us all, and I have done so."

"I have given you a leeway of six months in which you can give up this wild reckless life, claiming failing health if you choose, and heaven knows you are breaking fast, though you will not see it."

"I have sold every piece of the treasure, and invested all but the amount of this check, which I give you for your six months' leeway."

"I got for the treasures that much over my assessed value of it, and I sold it to different money-lenders in New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore.

"You still have a dozen sets superb jewelry you took, which are a fortune in themselves, and you have your home, and can readily draw the line at a dozen of servants and scores of guests daily, under the garb of ill-health.

"The returns of this treasure I have invested wisely, and our income will be large, so there will be no need to stint yourself, while the investments made will constantly increase in value, enlarging our fortune each year most liberally.

"Now you know, Celia, just what I have done and that before we are old people we will not be paupers, our child will not be a beggar."

Mrs. Hartwell had remained strangely silent as her husband confessed to her that he had at last turned at bay and acted for himself.

She had become deadly pale and her eyes gleamed with a wicked light.

At last she spoke and by a great force of will became calm.

"I have invited friends, Hartwell, for an afternoon on the water in my yacht, and you are invited to go if you desire, for the admiral will be there and others of influence who could well advance your interests.

"Upon my return to-night we will talk this matter over, and unless you put into my hands every dollar of your investments you shall rue it; yes, I vow to you that you shall hang at the yard-arm for self-confessed murder upon the high seas, and I will see to it that Claude Cassiday appears against you as a witness to prove that while on leave you went pirate treasure hunting in the Bahamas under an assumed name, robbed his father's family, and killed your companions to cover up your tracks.

"Now, sir, I go to join my guests on board my yacht," and the vicious-hearted woman swept out of the room, little dreaming of the shadow then falling upon her.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SKELETON IN THE CLOSET.

AMONG Mrs. Hartwell's extravagances was a yacht. It was a beautiful schooner with spacious cabin, sailed like a witch and was as stanch almost as a line-of-battle ship.

It was the same craft which she had chartered, as the Veiled Lady in Black, to go after the pirate treasure,* and buying it from Moses Gripstein, the Jew money-lender, she had retained the skipper, Captain Dan Deering, and crew.

Little did the captain and crew ever connect the beautiful witness of Overlook Manor with their mysterious veiled passenger to the Bahamas, whose face they had never seen.

Harold Hartwell had at least taken pleasure in the possession of the yacht, and he had enjoyed several short cruises in her, for he found Captain Dan Deering a very companionable man.

But upon the evening when his wife was to sail with her distinguished guests, after all that had passed between them he determined to remain at home.

Night came on and he paced his room with aching heart and troubled mind.

How far would his wife go in her threat, he wondered?

He knew that to thwart one of her selfish nature was dangerous in the extreme.

He knew her ambition to rule, to cut a dash in the world, and to check her in the midst of her triumph would cause her to hate him with the deepest venom.

If she must fall from her pinnacle for lack of money, then he, too, should come down with her, be the end to him what it might, was what he feared she had decided upon.

He could save himself by yielding to her all the treasure; but, then, self-preservation came in and a longing to make his daughter the richest of heiresses.

He had acted for her good it is really but justice to admit in his converting the booty into money which he had most wisely invested.

He knew that the struggle with his wife would be a bitter one, but he intended to stand firm to the very eve of her betrayal of him.

Then, if there was no hope for him, he would yield to save himself.

"She has developed into a perfect fiend," he muttered.

And even as he spoke there came quick, heavy steps upon the piazza, a loud knock that startled the sleeping butler from his nap, and the next moment he heard the words:

"The Hartwell yacht has been run down and Mrs. Hartwell is drowned."

"Break the news gently to the master."

He arose and his head reeled as though he had received a stunning blow.

But he rallied and met the startled butler at the door, and in the hall were two seamen who had brought the news.

"My daughter! my child?" he gasped.

Misunderstanding him one of the seamen answered quickly:

"No, sir, not your daughter, for she is safe; but your wife is lost!"

He bit his tongue until it bled to keep back the words:

"Thank God!"

Was it a thank God that his daughter was safe, or that his wife was drowned?

He was strangely calm, and ordering the carriage drove down to the wharves.

Two hours later Celeste lay upon her bed in her beautiful room, sobbing bitterly, for her mother had loved her, even been devoted to her child at heart.

And pacing the floor, his hands clasped behind his back, his head bent down in deep and painful meditation, Harold Hartwell passed the night.

The shock was a great one in the town, especially among the fashionable people to whom Mrs. Hartwell was best known.

The beautiful, dashing, gay, hospitable woman would be sadly missed by the lovers of good dinners and wines, and her place would not be soon filled, all admitted.

A vast concourse followed the dead woman to the grave, the clergymen vied with each other in eulogies over her, and the papers were full of the sad accident, of how the beautiful pleasure craft with its merry voyagers, had been run down by a great lubberly merchant vessel and the beautiful and rich Mrs. Hartwell, with not a wish unfilled, not a sorrow in the world, was the only one lost.

It was sad indeed to the outer world, a warning, the parsons said, that "in the midst of life we are in death," a homily that no one for a moment dreams of denying.

Back to the mansion went the father and daughter, and night settled down in gloom.

How deep the grief of the white-faced, silent sailor, all had said who saw him.

But was it grief, or suppressed joy, joy unspeakable at his own escape, that Harold Hartwell felt?

He had admired his beautiful, brilliant wife, but she had never allowed him to love her; she loved herself too well for that.

The day after the funeral the servants were called together, and the butler, the cook, coachman and Celeste's maid remained, while the half-dozen others were paid-off in full and discharged.

The rare and rich jewelry of Mrs. Hartwell, the massive silver plate used for great dinners, and rich laces, silks and other articles of value were put away by night in the secret closet in the library where the private treasure had been, there to remain until Celeste was of age, when they would fall to her ownership.

A governess was secured for Celeste, and Harold Hartwell, after a long leave at home, was ordered to sea in command of a fine ship, his commission of captain having been sent to him by the Government.

But he carried with him a secret which the world must never know, and left behind him a skeleton hidden away in the treasure closet which no one suspected, not even Celeste.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BUCCANEER.

A BRIG was sailing along among the Bahama Islands, lower sails set, and all on board prepared against a sudden hurricane which the appearance of the skies threatened.

There seemed so little thought of danger then from an enemy other than the elements, that no lookout was aloft, and the result was that as she forged out beyond the bold headland of an island, a cry broke from many voices:

"Sail ho! sail ho!"

The vessel was armed, and as beautiful a piece of sea machinery as could be found afloat in those days of swift-sailing and graceful-sailing craft.

That there was perfect discipline on board, everything showed, from deck to topmast, and her crew were neatly dressed, though in a picturesque uniform of white duck pants, blue sailor shirts and red skull-caps.

No one could tell, from a glance at the crew, to what nationality she belonged, for there were Spaniards, Mexicans, Cubans, Indians from the West India Islands, negroes, and a smattering of Americans, French, English, Irish and Danes.

Their faces were against them, too, for they had the look of cut-throats to a man, splendid sailors though they were, and fighters without fear or favor.

On the quarter-deck were several dark-faced officers, whose gorgeous uniforms of dark blue and gold betokened a display for dress.

When the cry came that a sail was in sight, all was excitement on board, and out of the cabin came a man of imposing appearance.

His form was graceful, and clad in a uniform that was very elegant, and gold-lace adorned enough for one wearing an admiral's rank.

He wore a sash of gold thread, massive epaulettes, the rims of which were studded with diamonds, while instead of their bearing an insignia of rank, they had a pair of spread wings of rubies that were brilliant and very effective.

His sword had a gold scabbard, the hilt rough with gems, and in front of his cap was the same insignia, a pair of scarlet wings.

In fact, the same device was worn by officers and men, and in the center of the sails could be also found the scarlet wings spread, while the figure-head was a mold with the red wings extended upon either side of the sharp bows of the brig.

The face of the commander was an interesting study, for in it there was so much of good and evil commingled.

It was a stern face, with strong features and eyes that were piercing and expressive, changing with the humors of the man.

His teeth were white as milk, even, and his smile could win a child's confidence, or, in anger wear the look of a tiger about to spring upon his prey.

The man was Kent, the Buccaneer, who had been dismissed from the naval service, gone utterly to the bad, and after a season in which he was thought to be dead, he emerged as a pirate.

Those who had known him in Boston asserted that the outlaw chief was none other than Kent Curtis, the one-time lover of Helen Marcy, who had become the wife of Claude Cassiday.

Of his deeds strange stories were told, and men averred that he bore a charmed life, that the hemp was not grown that would strangle him at the yard-arm.

Among his virtues were that he never robbed a poor skipper who owned his own craft, never took the money of a woman, or her jewels.

Again, he would never fire upon an American vessel-of-war, no matter in how close quarters he might be.

A merchant craft flying the Stars and Stripes, except in extreme cases, was never molested by Kent the Buccaneer; so men said who professed to know.

The vessel was the Red Wings, which he had named after his old schooner, captured through the act of his escaped boy lieutenant, Claude Cassiday.

The brig he had taken from Harold Hartwell, who had gone to capture Kent, his schooner and stronghold, not knowing that a part of the work had been done, for the chief had made his escape with a few of his men.

And with those men, when Captain Harold Hartwell was ashore hunting him, he had boarded and captured the brig.

He had sent the prisoners home, and hoisted his flag over the brig, to continue his lawless cruising and become more than ever a terror upon the seas.

Now, as he came on deck, he beheld a large vessel-of-war not over a league away from him.

A glance showed him his position, and that he was cut off from flight by islands in the way, except in one direction, unless he could make his way through a break in a reef a league distant.

But not a shadow on his face showed his thoughts and fears.

He had been in too many places of danger, where hope seemed hopeless, to yield to a dread now.

The vessel-of-war near him was one that his vessel, and another of her tonnage and armament, would be no match for.

If the hurricane came, then the vessel-of-war was in terrible danger of destruction, while he could escape, knowing those waters as he did.

But the storm might break within half an hour, perhaps not for several hours.

If night would come, then, without a pilot, for the vessel-of-war could not surely have one on board, he could readily dodge his foe.

The chances seemed against him largely, that he knew.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RED WINGS.

CAPTAIN KENT cast a look aloft and saw that there was no lookout there.

It was his own fault, for he had feared no enemy near and had just run out of a harbor on the other side of the island where he had been filling water-casks, cleaning and painting ship and doing what repairing was needed.

When further off a lookout would have been sent aloft.

Had one been there the vessel-of-war would have been sighted in plenty of time to give her a wide berth and not to run into the trap into which the Red Wings had surely gone.

The buccaneer's first order was to crowd his vessel with sail in the very face of the threatening storm.

If the vessel-of-war happened to be a slow sailer, there was a good chance that the Red Wings could round the island point ahead of her, and then have a clear sea and a stern chase.

If she was a swift sailer, then the chances were against the brig rounding the point.

Could she not do this she must attempt to run through a break in the reef, very narrow, terribly dangerous even in calm weather.

Going to the pass, with the wind calmer as she went, if the brig failed to print close enough she would miss it, and to go about and make a second attempt would bring the war-ship in easy range and a broadside might ruin all.

If the hurricane, the chances favored the brig and threatened the vessel-of-war.

But the first thing to be done was to run for it and try to round the point, for the brig could

* See DIME LIBRARY, 630.

give it a close shave, and thus gain upon the ship, whose greater depth would force her to keep further out from the shore.

It all depended upon the speed of the vessel-of-war.

As sail was being set, Kent ordered his flag sent up to the peak, and it was promptly obeyed.

The black ball was shaken out, and the heavy folds of a rebel flag were straightened out by the breeze, while in the center was a large ball of red, representing the world upheld by spread crimson wings.

This showed that the buccaneer was not dodging, but coming out boldly as an outlaw, acknowledging just who he was.

The ship-of-war had up the United States flag, and she, too, crowded on sail in the face of the coming storm.

Her commander evidently recognized the tactics of the buccaneer, and it would seem must know something of the nature of the waters, for instead of heading directly toward the brig, he pointed his bows on a course which would head her off.

At this, Kent the Buccaneer leveled his glass at the vessel-of-war and took a long and searching observation of her.

"If she luffs up, Senor Santo, to round the Blind Shoal yonder, I will be convinced there is a pilot on board of her," he said.

"And if she does not, chief, she is lost," answered Senor Santo.

"No, she will discover she is shoaling and go about before she strikes."

"If I thought not I would signal and warn her; but if she luffs to round it we will gain time, and we need it."

"Yes, for she sails well," and Captain Kent continued his observation of the vessel-of-war until the shoal loomed up ahead of her.

But suddenly she luffed sharply, continued her course, luffed again and again, and by a series of such maneuvers worked her way around the very edge of the shoal, while her depth would not have allowed her to cross over.

"Santo, that craft has a man at her helm who knows these waters."

"I feel sure of it, senor."

Then the chief kept his glass to his eye constantly, and at last said slowly:

"Senor Santo."

"Yes, Senor Chief."

"My boy lieutenant whom we called Pinto, made his escape and was made a midshipman in the Navy of the United States, and if I am not very much mistaken he is the pilot on yonder ship."

"If so, senor, we have everything to fear, for the boy knows these waters only second to yourself."

"Yes, he does; but take my glass and see if you can pick him out among the group upon the quarter-deck."

Santo took the glass and turned it upon the vessel.

At last he said:

"Senor Chief, a lad in uniform stands by the helmsmen, and I notice that he is pointing now and then ahead, while near him is one who is evidently the ship's captain."

"That is the lad I say is Pinto."

"He looks it, Senor Chief."

Kent then called another officer and bade him see if he could find a familiar face among the officers on the ship's deck.

"There is one who looks like Pinto, senor."

"Then we have everything to fear; but see how the ship is crowding us—we can never make the point, Santo."

"No, senor, she is heading us off."

"Then I'll head for the pass through the reef—bail the storm will be upon us in a few minutes."

With the changing of the course of the brig the vessel-of-war also changed, and in pursuit.

But the brig held boldly on toward the pass through the reef, held on until the tempest struck her and then, driven to leeward of the channel she went upon the rocks with a crash that shivered her almost to atoms.

CHAPTER X.

THE SOLE SURVIVOR.

THE buccaneer craft Red Wings struck with a force that was terrific.

Her masts and all their hamper came down with a crash, the heavy guns were torn from their fastenings and driven through the bulwarks, and the wave which followed swept the decks clear.

When it passed not a man was visible upon the decks.

But a moment after a form emerged from the cabin, and he was enveloped in a cork jacket and was prepared for a battle with the waves.

It was the buccaneer chief, and he had saved himself, when he saw that the brig must strike, by bounding down the cabin companionway and closing behind him the door.

The shock and the following waves he felt had doomed the ship and her crew.

But he hastily incased himself in his cork

jacket, and then opening a secret receptacle took therefrom his treasure, and buckled it about him.

Then he went on deck and running forward gained the shelter of the forecabin for a moment.

The vessel-of-war had gone about and was standing off gallantly in the storm, and shaking his clinched fist toward her he cried:

"Curses upon you, boy, you have been my ruin."

"But I am not dead yet, and while there is life I hope."

He then bounded upon the high bows and gazed out before him.

He saw the waves driving onward to break upon a low island half a mile away.

To reach that island was his safety.

To remain upon the brig would be his doom, for it was fast going to pieces.

The vessel had struck squarely upon the reef, riding way over it, so that there were no rocks to be dashed against beyond.

He waited for the next huge wave and went off upon its bosom.

He found that his life-jacket served him well, and he was able to hold his own as the seas hurled him on toward the island.

At length he caught a view of the dimly outlined shore and he struggled to reach the beach.

He felt himself carried along on a huge breaker and the next instant was hurled with great force upon the sands.

The receding sea swept him back, to again throw him upon the beach, rolling him over and over.

He gave a cry of almost despair as he felt the belt about his waist break and his treasure was torn from him by the ruthless waves.

But he must save his life, and he ran rapidly, the moment he could regain his feet, to a place of safety beyond the reach of the waters.

Utterly exhausted he dropped down in the sands and seemed to lose consciousness.

When he awoke from an exhausting sleep the stars were shining, the tempest had passed over, and far off he could discern the lights of the vessel-of-war.

He might after all have escaped death by drowning to be captured and strung up to the yard-arm.

He made his way up among the rocks and seeking a refuge again lay down to rest.

The sun shining in his face awakened him and he beheld the boats of the vessel-of-war out searching the shores.

The beach was strewn with the dead buccaneer crew and the debris of his vessel.

The brig had disappeared save a part of her hull upon the surf over which the seas still broke with great violence.

Two boats were coming to the lee side of the island which had been his refuge, and if he could not find a hiding-place he would be captured.

He crawled along the ground to a thicket of dense growth, and as the only means of escape got up into the thick branches of a tree and hid there.

The seamen from the vessel-of-war landed, gathered the dead and buried them, while the shore was searched apparently for valuables.

But, though some of the seamen passed within a few yards of him they did not discover his hiding-place.

"Not a soul escaped alive," he heard an officer remark, and he chuckled in triumph at his own escape.

When the dead were properly buried the boats were recalled by a gun from the ship, for other storm-clouds were rising, and the captain of the cruiser evidently desired to get well out of so dangerous a latitude before another hurricane should catch him there.

The boats hastened back to the vessel, and the sole survivor of the wrecked buccaneer watched them with grim satisfaction.

He saw the different boats return to the ship, which at once got under way and sailed off in a northerly course.

When she was too far off for a glass to see him from her decks, the buccaneer captain came out from his hiding-place.

He was faint from hunger, and his lips and throat were parched, so he first sought for food and drink.

He found a cask of fresh water from the brig rolling in the surf and dragged it out.

A small cask of brandy and another of wine were also rescued, and then he discovered kits of food which were most welcome.

There were dried meats, sea biscuit and other edibles in sufficient quantities to last him for a couple of months.

There were boats from the brig, shattered badly, strewn upon the beach, with plenty of debris, sails, spars and rigging.

At dark the storm broke and he sought the shelter of the thicket and slept soundly.

The next morning, putting on his cork jacket he swam out to the wreck.

He gave a shout of delight as he beheld the brig's yawl, filled with water but held by the long painters which had caught to the wreck, and which appeared not to be damaged.

It was long and tedious work, but the boat

was at last emptied of water and found to be intact.

The wreck furnished him with very little that he needed, and so he went back to the island and found a small haven of refuge for his boat.

The carpenter's kit of tools had drifted ashore, as though all was done to help the man who was making such a brave fight for life, and he felt that after all there was hope for him.

CHAPTER XI.

FOR THE SAKE OF REVENGE.

THE second day was calm and the buccaneer arose early and began work.

He was not a man to sit down and repine over his misfortunes or to flinch from the perils and almost insurmountable barriers staring him in the face.

The carpenter's tools were laid out, the debris that was suitable was collected and carried over to the inlet where the yawl was, and the cask of water, liquor, wine and stores were also carried over and put under the shelter of a sail tent which he had erected for himself.

To deck the yawl over was the buccaneer's first work, for he knew that she must stand some very rough weather.

A rudder of one of the other boats was strengthened and fitted to her, and a short mast and bowsprit.

Sails were cut to fit and bent on, the mast strengthened by stays and the cockpit was made just large enough for comfort, with a hatch that could close it up if need be.

Thus several weeks passed away before the daring mariner was ready to trust himself upon the sea, his only means of escape, as in time, if he remained there he must surely starve.

He had made diligent search for the treasure he had lost, but it had not been washed ashore, or if so, had been found by some of the men of the cruiser.

At last, one morning after a storm, and with a brisk wind blowing directly toward the Florida Coast, the Buccaneer hoisted sail and stood away from the islands which had been his refuge.

He found the yawl behaved splendidly, standing up well under her sail and bowling along rapidly, while she seemed not to mind the rough sea that was running.

In three hours he had dropped the island out of sight, and when darkness fell upon the sea he was alone upon the waters with not even a gull in sight.

The morning dawned to find a chain of islands in view, and he headed for one, and making a landing sought the ship he had wrecked, for he had held steadily on his way for twenty-four hours.

Again he started the next morning on his way, and so continued on his voyage, resting where he could find an island to land upon.

Several times he was caught in very ugly weather, but he was a perfect sailor, and the yawl behaved splendidly, so that he weathered them all right.

At last, one morning, after being thirty-six hours without rest, he sighted the green-clad shores of Florida.

Then his pale, haggard face lighted up, while his eyes sparkled revengefully.

As he neared the shore his face grew stern and cold as though carved in marble.

He uttered no word, held straight on his course, and toward sunset ran into a small inlet where the water allowed him to go broadside along the bank.

Seizing the anchor he threw it ashore and springing out uttered one word, spoken savagely, viciously, triumphantly:

"Safe!"

He paced up and down the shore like a man whose brain was writhing in bitterest thought.

At length, he paused and shook his fist at the sea, it seemed, while slowly from his lips fell the words:

"Yes, I am saved from death at the yard-arm. Saved from death at the sea; but that boy sought to hunt me down, and he believes he has done his work."

"I loved his mother, oh how madly, once, and she could have changed my whole career; but Claude Cassiday won her from me."

"She decided between us and took him, and it made me reckless, revengeful, and I became the wanderer I now am."

"It was a strange fatality that brought that boy, her son and his, across my path."

"When I found him at sea in his little boat, and he told me his name, I vowed to be avenged upon the parents."

"I determined to raise the boy in piracy, to make him a buccaneer, and then to hurt the heart of his mother to the quick to feel that her son was what I had made him, to know what my revenge meant."

"But he escaped me, and, curse him, he won honors for himself that sent him as an officer of a man-of-war to hunt me down."

"What if he did save me, from a sentiment of pretended friendship, when I was a prisoner, by aiding my escape?"

"That did not cancel my debt of revenge against his mother and father, and wipe out the

fact that my stronghold and schooner were captured through his aid.

"Now he has driven my beautiful Red Wings upon the rocks, and I am the sole survivor.

"Had that boy not been on the vessel-of-war I could have escaped her; but she was under his bold pilot hand, and the boldest of the bold he certainly is.

"I was raised for a purpose and the purpose is revenge.

"I lost all of my treasure, except my belt of gold, containing also a few valuable gems—three or four thousand at best.

"I have not a friend, no vessel, no officers or crew, so I am alone in the world; but I am safe, the sea did not swallow me up, and I am free to follow the bent of my will.

"That will be to make my way to Boston, and when my beard is grown long no one will know me.

"She lives there, my poor sister lives there, and that is the place from which to start out anew in my career.

"I will make that old Jew Gripstein my friend and then see what the future has in store for me.

"Kent the Buccaneer yet lives, as the world shall learn before long, and there are those who shall know that he lives for revenge."

The calm manner in which the buccaneer uttered his words showed how earnest he was.

Having decided upon his course he took from about his waist his belt, and poured the contents upon a piece of sail spread upon the ground.

There were a number of Spanish onzas of gold, some English and American coins, and a few gems.

He looked over them carefully, as though valuing the lot, and then assured that the night would not be boisterous he slept on shore.

The next morning he hoisted sail, and, standing out of the little inlet, headed up the coast, keeping close inshore, so that he could run for a harborage by night and in case of threatening weather.

He was in no hurry, for he wished his beard to cover his face wholly as a disguise, when he should at last arrive in Boston, which was to be his starting point for revenge against the woman who had refused his love, her son who had brought destruction upon him.

CHAPTER XII.

UNDER A BAN.

LET me now return to the youth whose strange, eventful life had brought him so much of sorrow, of peril and adventure.

Though cleared by the court-martial of guilt in the killing of a brother officer, for all testimony only served to show that he had acted in self-defense, and, as a mild punishment ordered off on another long cruise in foreign seas, there were those who were not satisfied with his escape from a severe penalty.

Though through the pluck and skill of young Midshipman Claude Cassiday the worst of sea rovers had been driven to destruction, his acts only served to raise in the hearts of a few who had it in their power to do evil, a feeling of jealous hatred at his success.

That Claude Cassiday had won fame over their heads, these men could not forget or forgive, and they only wished to humiliate him, to force him out of the navy if in their power to do so.

Without any outward act which the ship's commander could bring them to account for, they did many things which would have made the life of one differently constituted from their victim, utterly wretched.

Assuming a superior goodness, they would not speak, except officially, to one who had been Kent the Buccaneer's boy lieutenant.

They could not forgive his having been a free rover, no matter what the circumstances connected with his being forced into piracy since his capture as a boy, or rather his being picked up at sea and forced into piracy.

His splendid pluck and nerve under any peril, and being a superb swordsman, for he had learned under a master in the buccaneer chief, and his deadly aim, caused his persecutors to fear him too much to openly insult or bring him to face them in a personal combat.

But it was by innuendoes, acts behind his back, and looks, that they made him feel, yet keeping within bounds, so as not to provoke an open eruption.

That he was their master as a sailor, that he never neglected or shirked a duty, all had to admit, but this only made them wish the more to drive him out of the service.

So matters stood when the vessel on which Claude Cassiday was a sub-officer was cruising in foreign seas.

The Algerians had been very arrogant in their dealings with the vessels of all nations, and rumor came that an American merchant vessel had been driven ashore on the coast, and her crew were held as slaves.

A protest met with a denial that such was the case, and Claude Cassiday, who spoke Spanish perfectly, volunteered to make his way to Al-

giers as a spy, and learn the exact truth of the affair.

He was accordingly sent ashore in Malaga, and shipped upon a Spanish craft for Algiers, going as a young merchant who sought to make purchases.

For several weeks he was in Algiers as a spy, but finding that he was suspected he shipped upon a Greek vessel as a common sailor and made his way out of the country, rejoining his vessel after several months absence at Gibraltar.

But he had accomplished his mission by discovering that the American captain and his crew were held as slaves at a certain place upon the coast, some dozen leagues from Algiers, and where they were forced to work from daylight to dark upon some fortification that was being erected there.

Claude Cassiday also learned that the Algerians had only a small force of soldiers there as guards over the American and other prisoners, and that by a bold stroke a party of determined men, landing under cover of the night might rescue them.

As the Bey of Algiers denied all knowledge of such prisoners, protesting his innocence of holding an American slave, nothing could be done in that quarter.

And so it was that the captain of the vessel-of-war consented to allow Claude Cassiday to lead a boat expedition by night to make a landing, march inland half a league to the prison-pen and rescue the prisoners.

The darkest of nights was chosen and three boat-loads of picked men, armed with cutlasses and muskets, landed on the coast and silently marched inland.

The prison-pen was reached, a charge was made by the brave tars under their young leader, and the guards were swept away instantly, while a cheer by the Americans was answered from within by ringing cries from the prisoners.

It was a short, sharp, deadly fight, but the Americans won against three times their numbers and the rescued prisoners swelled their force on the retreat to the boats even more than the brave sailors who had gone upon the perilous expedition.

There were not only American prisoners rescued, but Englishmen and French as well, and armed with the weapons taken from the guards they fell in under the leadership of Claude Cassiday.

But the alarm had been given, the tocsin calling to arms was heard, and from the camp of soldiers not far from the prison there came a squadron of wild Algerines down upon the retreating band.

The boats were yet some distance away, so a stand was made and the horsemen were beaten back, when once more the retreat was begun.

A mounted force flanked them and cut them off from the boats, but the midshipman in charge hauled off out of range and prevented their capture.

With a gallant charge they cut their way through, and reached the shore, when a signal called the boats to the beach just as the Algerine soldiers, rendered desperate at seeing their foes escape, made a rush upon them.

It was a hot, hand-to-hand fight, but the Americans remained firmly together, and the Algerines were driven off.

Then the young leader threw his force into the boats, carrying the dead and wounded with him, and with a cheer the gallant tars went to their oars and rowed rapidly away, their mission accomplished by the courage of the young officer, whom his foes branded with the title of "Buccaneer Middy."

CHAPTER XIII.

A BELT OF GOLD.

THE victory for the American soldiers had not been a bloodless one.

The young leader had been twice wounded, once by a pistol-shot in the shoulder, and once by a sword-cut, but fortunately both were slight.

He had lost his cap, and his handkerchief was bound about his head, but he seemed to make light of both wounds.

A number of sailors had received slight wounds, two only being seriously hurt, and three had been killed, while the rescued prisoners had not escaped without several of their number being slain, and others bearing injuries.

But all were so glad that the victory had been complete, that the rescue had been made, that they seemed to regard their wounds as a natural consequence and the death of their comrades as a necessary sacrifice.

The captain of the merchant ship, though he had held up bravely, had received a mortal wound.

Though he felt this he did not yield until all were in the boats on the retreat.

That he was wounded Claude Cassiday knew, but he was not prepared for the words:

"My brave young friend I have received my death wound."

"Not so bad as that, sir, I hope," was the cheering response.

"Yes, I am sinking fast, and before I die I have a favor to ask of you."

They were all crowded in the boat, the merchant captain and a midshipman seated in the stern with Claude Cassiday, while another officer of the ship-of-war was near and a dozen of the rescued prisoners crouching down to keep out of the way of the rowers.

"Yes, my friend, you did your work gallantly, you served us well, for we would have died under that cruel life as others have done."

"My poor boy, about your age, died under the hardships, and now I wish to ask of you a favor, for I feel that I am going fast."

His voice was weak now, and he seemed to be sinking rapidly, so Claude responded:

"Anything I can do for you, sir, I will gladly do."

"I feel that, and I leave my trust in noble hands."

"I managed to hide from those wretches a belt of money, and it is now about my waist."

"In the belt are nearly three thousand dollars, and all directions to find my wife, to whom I wish you to give it in person, telling her of my death."

"She has her little home, and income sufficient to support her, but as my vessel was lost, this money will come in well for her, poor woman, for she has lost her son and I am soon to go."

"You will be going home soon, and then you can take her the money."

"I will not return for a long time yet, sir, but I can send it."

"No, no, keep it until you go, but write to her for me and tell her all about it, and how I died."

"You will do this for me, young sir?"

"Gladly; but I hope when the surgeon sees you, as soon as we get on board the ship, he may aid you."

"No, I am beyond his skill; I feel it."

"But who planned this bold rescue?"

"The captain of our ship heard of your being held as slaves, and sought to gain your release from the Bey of Algiers; but he refused and it was determined to make a night expedition to rescue you."

"And right nobly was it done."

"You have a bright future before you, young sir."

For some moments no word was spoken.

The men pulled hard at their oars, for they did not know but that some lurking Algerine cruiser might pounce down upon them.

The ship-of-war was over three leagues away from the scene so that the pull back was a long one.

As there were more prisoners released than were supposed to have been there, the three boats were crowded and the rowing was hard.

But the oarsmen bent hard to their task, and relieved now and then, as a man's strength gave out, for all had had a hard night of it, the steady, swift pace was kept up.

Though Claude Cassiday had not wished to take the belt of money from the dying captain, the latter had insisted, and the young officer had buckled it about his own waist.

The boats were pulling in single file, the one in which the young leader was being in the advance, and suddenly came from the man in the bow the cry:

"Light ho!"

"Ay, ay, my man, it is the ship," answered Claude and he had to sternly command silence or the men would have broken forth into a cheer.

On in silence pulled the boats, for the oars had all been muffled, and no sound save the splash, or a groan from a wounded man, broke the silence.

At last the lights loomed up more brightly and half an hour after the boats were hailed from the ship.

"Boats ahoy! What boats are those?" came the stern hail.

"Cassiday!" responded the young sailor, and they ran alongside the cruiser.

"We are at the ship now, sir, and I hope the surgeon can help you," said Claude to the merchant captain.

No response was given and Claude bending over listened attentively, then placed his hands upon his pulse.

"He is asleep, sir," said the sergeant of marines.

"It is his everlasting sleep, sergeant—he is dead," was the low response.

As Claude went over the side he was met by the commander, too anxious to know the result of the expedition to await on the quarter-deck.

"Well, Cassiday, your looks show there has been hot work; but with what result?"

"We brought back with us, sir, forty prisoners," was the response in a modest tone.

"It was a brave act, Mr. Cassiday, and one that will win for you promotion, I hope," was the reply of the ship's commander.

"Pardon me, sir, but we raised such an alarm ashore would it not be well to get the ship out of sight before dawn?"

"You are right, Mr. Cassiday," and orders were given to crowd the ship with sail, and then the captain entered his cabin followed by Claude Cassiday who went to make his report.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE REWARD OF HEROISM.

"WHY, Cassidy, you are really badly hurt," cried the captain of the vessel-of-war as he beheld the young officer's white face, and the stained handkerchief, while his left arm hung limp by his side.

"A slight sword-cut, sir, and only a flesh wound in the shoulder from a pistol ball," was the reply, but the young sailor dropped weariedly into a chair.

The captain sent for the surgeon of the ship to come at once to the cabin, dropping all other work.

The order was promptly obeyed and Claude's shoulder was the first wound looked to.

The probe soon found the bullet and the forceps drew it out, after which the wound was dressed.

Then the gash on the head was skillfully stitched up and dressed, the young sailor uttering no word nor flinching under the pain.

"You have a nerve of iron, Mr. Cassidy," said the captain admiringly.

"You have indeed—drink this," and the surgeon handed him a glass of brandy, after which he gathered up his tools and went to aid his assistant.

"Now, Cassidy, you must seek rest, and tomorrow if you are able, I will hear your report."

"I would rather make it to-night, sir, if you please."

"Very well, out with it."

The kind-hearted captain seemed anxious to get the young officer to his quarters, fearing the result of his wounds, for the surgeon had said that neither were slight, and the one in the shoulder might prove serious.

In as few words as possible Claude Cassidy made his report, the captain noting the fact that the personal pronoun "I" was seldom used.

When he had finished his story, even to the death in the boat of the merchant captain, the captain said in a jocular way:

"You went along with the expedition, I suppose, Cassidy?"

"Oh yes, sir!"

"Well, I failed to hear anything you did from yourself, so I will have to get the report from others; but it strikes me you were in the fight, to look at you."

"Now I sincerely hope that our Government will uphold my sending you to rescue these poor men; but if not I will be in for it very seriously, I fear."

"Still, I did what I deemed my duty," and Captain Nevitte seemed a trifle worried as he glanced over the list of killed and wounded.

Then Claude showed the belt of gold to him and was told to keep it securely locked away in the paymaster's strong box.

Claude then departed for his own quarters and was soon sleeping soundly while the captain returned to his cabin and held a conference with his first lieutenant.

When the dawn broke the ship was far away toward the straits of Gibraltar, and after breakfast Captain Nevitte heard the report of the private officers of the expedition and of the prisoners.

From these, particularly the prisoners and men, he learned of Claude Cassidy's heroism, and how he had refused to retreat in the face of great odds against him, and had accomplished his purpose by desperate pluck alone.

In rendering their report the junior officers had been more anxious to make known their own individual heroism to the detriment of Claude Cassidy, for unfortunately it so happened that those who had been selected for the expedition were not the friends of the young sailor.

As Claude had been more seriously wounded than was at first believed, he was ordered to remain below by the surgeon, for several days.

The dead were buried at sea, the wounded cared for most tenderly, and the rescued prisoners, not Americans, were to be turned over to their respective countries, the Spaniards at Malaga, the English at Gibraltar and the French at Brest.

Those of the American seamen who wished to ship on the vessel-of-war were permitted to do so, and those who desired to return to the United States were to be sent home in the first ship met with that was homeward bound.*

After several weeks Claude Cassidy reported for duty again, announcing himself as good as ever, though he still had a pale and haggard look.

A few of his brother officers welcomed him on duty again with real friendly regard, but his old foes were more than ever turned against him because he had again won honors over their hands.

They would not admit that he had done anything more than any man could have done had he been given the chance, and some hoped that Captain Nevitte would be severely dealt with by the Government for allowing the expedition,

* Students of history will recall the trouble that the United States and other countries had with the Algerines in the latter part of the past century and first years of this.—THE AUTHOR.

upon the shores of Algiers, and Claude Cassidy would also suffer as the leader.

But this crew of ill-natured young officers were doomed to disappointment, as in time came complimentary orders respecting Captain Nevitte, regarding his action, and the promotion of Claude Cassidy to a senior-lieutenancy "for an act of heroism deserving of the highest praise."

This was a terrible set-back to the men who hated Claude Cassidy and who had set their hearts upon driving the ex-buccaneer from the service.

But they did not despair, and still had hopes of entrapping him in some way so as to force him into resigning from the navy.

CHAPTER XV.

UNDER ARREST.

It was not long after his promotion that a second honor awaited Claude Cassidy, for a vessel-of-war, late from home, brought to Captain Nevitte, and "the brave young leader of the expedition into the land of the Algerines," permission from the American Congress to accept and wear decorations from the Kings of England, France and of Spain, for the services rendered in rescuing subjects of those kingdoms from a life of cruel slavery under barbarian masters.

The decorations were presented by the American captain into whose hands they had been intrusted, and Claude Cassidy's heart swelled with pride and joy at the honor he knew inwardly that he had deservedly won.

"How my mother and sister will rejoice when they hear of this honor to me," he said to a brother officer.

His selection was an unfortunate one to make the remark to, for the reply was:

"I would not, as an American, accept any decoration from a king."

At this Claude's foes laughed, but their amusement was checked at the quiet query:

"Have you ever done aught to get the chance to refuse, Mr. Knox?"

Mr. Knox never had, but he did not say as much, and winced under the pointed question. Of course with those who were bent upon Claude Cassidy's being driven from the service, these decorations were another thorn to pierce their sides.

He was ascending the ladder of fame too rapidly, and in the face of their every purpose to keep him under.

One night while the ship was lying in the harbor of Naples, a party was made up to go ashore for a jolly evening of it.

Claude Cassidy was not feeling very well, but was so urged that he consented to go, and even regretted his doing so as he found himself among a lot of young officers bent upon a carousal.

At supper he drank sparingly, but this did not seem to make him feel any better, but his comrades were in for "a night of it," and he was forced to remain, for he would not desert them.

Whether it was that his feeling badly had something to do with it or not, certain it was that the wine went to his head and what happened he never clearly understood.

But the next morning he awoke in a room in the hotel, and with a head that seemed splitting open.

On the table and floor were scattered cards, bottles and glasses, and every appearance that an orgie had been held there.

He was fully dressed, his eyes were bloodshot and he staggered as he crossed the floor.

His leave ashore had expired hours before, as he saw by a glance at the sun.

But he braced up as well as he could, and feeling in his pockets for his money, found that he had only a few francs, when he had been liberally supplied when he came ashore.

Making his way to the office he paid his bill and learned that his comrades had returned to the ship before dawn.

Going off in a shore boat he reported himself and was ordered to his quarters.

At last he saw one of his brother officers who was friendly to him and he asked eagerly:

"Sanford, what was the matter with me last night?"

"Well, Cassidy, as a temperance man I suppose you do not know, so I will enlighten you by saying that you were drunk."

"Drunk! why I drank but a couple of glasses of wine that I remember."

"Your memory is very bad then, for you drank several bottles, and was so drunk that you could not be brought off to the ship, and I tried my best, Cassidy, but you were like a log, and we left you at the hotel."

"Those of us who are your friends tried to check you, for we saw that your enemies rejoiced in your orgie."

"Have you figured up your losses?"

"I took a hundred dollars ashore with me, intending to make some purchases, and I had only ten francs left."

"But your notes?"

"What notes?"

"The I. O. U.'s you gave Brackett and Telfair."

"I gave no notes."

"You certainly did!"

"But for what?"

"Why, man, were you so drunk you did not know how you played cards last night?"

"Why, I never play cards for money, Sanford."

"I never knew you to do so before, Cassidy; but you did last night; gambling away the money you had, then your watch and chain, and next your decorations, as also your medal from our Government as a life-saver."

"Then you gave your notes to Brackett and Telfair for something like eight hundred apiece."

"My God! Can this be true?" groaned Claude Cassidy, now as pale as death.

"Every word of it, Cassidy, I assure you on my honor."

"Then I was mad, for I do not remember it."

"You know I am hardly more than on speaking terms with either Telfair or Brackett."

"I know, but they bantered you to play and you did so, Dorsey also being in the game."

"I remember nothing of it; but I do recall taking a couple of glasses of wine, and as I was not feeling well, it must have affected me seriously, and I thus have lost my head."

"This is a most serious matter, Sanford."

"I fear it will prove so for you, my dear Cassidy, after the court-martial you had before you sailed."

"These old sailors have long memories."

Claude Cassidy was almost crushed by what had occurred.

If he had gone astray he had done so unwittingly and did not remember anything that had occurred after he sat down to supper in the hotel.

He asked Sanford to give him a full account of what had happened, and listened with amazement.

Then he said:

"I have money, fortunately, to redeem the articles I pledged, and to pay my I. O. U.'s, to Brackett and Telfair."

"But it will about strip me, and you remember we were paid off only a week ago."

"I will go to the captain and report just what occurred, and pledge him on my honor that I knew nothing of what happened."

"It is the only course you can pursue, Cassidy, and your past good record may save you."

"I am glad you have the money, too, to pay those fellows, for if you had not I was going to offer my aid, as I have plenty, and if you need more call on me."

"You are a good friend, Sanford, but thank you, I am supplied sufficiently if it is no more than you say," and Claude Cassidy sent a request to Captain Nevitte asking leave to come to the cabin and make an explanation.

The permission was granted by an order for Lieutenant Claude Cassidy to report at once in the cabin to his commanding officer, an order which was promptly obeyed by the young officer who was glad of the chance to explain the very unfortunate situation in which he found himself, if explain he could.

CHAPTER XVI.

UNDER FIRE.

CAPTAIN NEVITTE looked both hurt and angry, when Claude Cassidy appeared before him.

He had become very fond of the handsome and daring young officer, and though he knew all that his earlier life had been he did not believe him intentionally guilty of one wrong act.

Of course it had been reported to him that "Cassidy was ashore, too much intoxicated to come off to the ship," and a certain ingenious questioning in various sources had drawn out the information that the young officer had not only gambled heavily, but had so far forgotten himself as to pledge his decorations.

It was a blow to him to feel that Claude Cassidy had met with such a downfall.

When therefore Cassidy appeared before him he felt both injured and angry and said sternly:

"Well, sir, what have you to say for your disgraceful conduct ashore last night?"

"I have only to say, Captain Nevitte, that I asked this interview to tell you the truth."

"I make no excuses for myself whatever, sir."

"I only know that I was not feeling well, and, urged against my will to go ashore, I did so."

"At supper I recall taking two glasses of wine, no more, and yet I awoke in a room at the hotel this morning, with even my hat on, my head in a whirl, and Mr. Sanford has told me all of which I was guilty, and he must make the report of my sins to you, with others whom you may wish to question, for upon my honor, sir, I remember nothing after drinking the second glass of wine."

There was an air of candor, of truthfulness about this statement that impressed Captain Nevitte; but yet he did not understand how Cassidy could have done all that he was accused of and yet know nothing about it.

He accordingly, at the request of Claude, sent for officers Sanford, Brackett, Telfair and Dorsey.

They soon entered and Claude Cassidy said:

"It is at my request, gentlemen, that you tell Captain Nevitte just what occurred last night as far as I am concerned."

Thus urged Searle Sanford made his report, and he tried to shield his friend all in his power, but his acts had to be made known, as he demanded it.

Mr. Dorsey then gave his version of the affair and he minced no words whatever, but very frankly told how Claude had become boisterous, ordering more wine, and after awhile when a game of cards was proposed by several, he joined in it to the surprise of all.

Mr. Telfair's testimony came next, and he told how Claude had bantered him to play, and a game was made up of four, those present excepting Sanford, who had gone off to the ship at an early hour.

Buck Brackett was the last to tell his story.

It certainly was a very severe one against Claude Cassiday, for he told how the young officer had offered his watch and chain as collateral, then his decorations, and lastly his I. O. U.'s for his losses, which were large.

"Was he drinking the while?" asked Captain Nevitte.

"Yes, sir, he drank a great deal, but we did not consider him drunk until we started to come off to the ship, when he became unmanageable, and we were forced to leave him ashore in a room of the tavern."

"You hold Mr. Cassiday's decorations I believe?"

"Yes, sir," answered Brackett.

"For what sum were they pledged?"

"As collateral for five hundred dollars, sir."

"You also had his I. O. U.?"

"Yes, sir."

"For what amount?"

"Six hundred dollars, sir."

"And you, Mr. Telfair, hold an I. O. U. against Mr. Cassiday?"

"Yes, sir."

"Will you name the sum?"

"Eight hundred dollars, sir."

"You also hold his watch and chain?"

"No, sir, but Dorsey does."

"What is the amount you hold against the watch and chain, Mr. Dorsey?"

"Three hundred dollars, sir."

"This all amounts to twenty-two hundred dollars?"

"Yes, Captain, Nevitte."

"Are there any other claims against you, Mr. Cassiday?"

"I do not know, sir."

"Do you gentlemen know of any?"

All answered in the negative.

"Are you prepared to meet these debts of honor, Mr. Cassiday?"

All awaited the reply, and for some time Claude Cassiday did not speak.

At last he said in a low voice:

"Yes, sir, every dollar."

"Pray go and get your money and liquidate these debts now."

Claude Cassiday left the cabin on his errand, and the young officers who awaited his return cast knowing glances at each other, as though wondering how he could pay so large a sum, for he was not known to have other than his pay, and part of this was always forwarded to his mother and sister.

He soon returned and held in his hands a buckskin bag of gold.

"Opening it he paid first the money for his decorations, then his I. O. U.'s, after which he redeemed his watch and chain.

There was a look of regret upon the faces of two present, for they had not expected he could pay his debts and redeem his pledges.

But he had done so, and he yet had a couple of hundred dollars left, it appeared.

Then Captain Nevitte said:

"Gentlemen, we have a mail from home and the paymaster has letters for you.

"Mr. Cassiday, you remain, please, for I wish to see you."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MISSING MONEY.

THOSE present took the hint that they were to depart, and they arose from their seats, excepting Claude Cassiday, who seemed deeply moved by all that had occurred to place him in the position in which he found himself.

But Captain Nevitte did not intend to let them off thus easily and he said:

"One moment, while I say to you, Messrs. Brackett, Telfair and Dorsey, that I consider your conduct disgraceful and despicable as well.

"You led a drunken comrade into play with you, and I am only sorry I can not in any way punish you as your conduct deserves, but you at least know my opinion in this matter and whatever Mr. Cassiday may have to suffer you are not blameless.

"You can go."

The young officers felt the rebuke keenly and skulked out of the cabin, while Claude Cassiday remained, awaiting the pleasure of his commander.

At length the captain said:

"Mr. Cassiday, it is a most painful duty to me to order you under arrest, for your conduct

demands a trial, as you have done that which is wholly unbecoming an officer and a gentleman, and I very much fear me that your good record will not save you.

"I am tempted, in reviewing your past, to give you a chance to save yourself by allowing you to send in your resignation, taking the consequences with the Government for doing so, and thus saving you from the disgrace of a dismissal, and leave to you the decorations you so well won, for if dismissed in dishonor the countries which bestowed honors upon you will withdraw them.

"You will, therefore, write out your resignation at once."

"Captain Nevitte, at heart I am guiltless of any wrong, for I am in utter oblivion of all that took place, and I can only account for it in two ways: either my condition was such that the wine completely upset me, or I was drugged."

"Drugged! why, Cassiday, you surely cannot accuse any of your brother officers of such a crime?"

"I accuse no one, sir, but if I behaved as is said, and I have no reason to doubt Mr. Sanford's word, I was certainly under an influence foreign to my nature.

"I will, therefore, not resign, sir, but stand my trial."

"You are wrong, Cassiday, all wrong, for your disgrace will follow."

"I will take the risk, sir."

"Very well; I can but order you under arrest at once; but first let me say that I received a letter from the wife of the merchant captain whom you rescued, and who intrusted to your keeping a belt of gold."

"Yes, sir."

"She wrote you, I believe, thanking you for your services to her husband, and bidding you keep the money intrusted to you until your return to America?"

"She did, sir."

"She now writes me, asking that you turn it over to my keeping, to be sent to her by the first opportunity."

"Here is her letter."

Claude Cassiday had turned deadly pale, and his fingers shook as he took the letter, until Captain Nevitte asked:

"What ails you, Cassiday?"

"Captain Nevitte, I should have reported to you before, sir, that that money is gone."

"Gone?"

"Yes, sir, and it was this discovery that really made me ill yesterday."

"My God! Cassiday, what can you mean?"

"I mean, sir, that I left the belt, with money of my own, in my state-room, hidden away where I was sure it would be safe.

"But yesterday morning when I went to put my pay with it, I discovered that the belt had been robbed of the money, twenty-seven hundred dollars in all, and the blow made me ill."

"This is a remarkable story, Cassiday, but why did you not speak of it to me at once?"

"I wished to see, sir, if I could not discover the thief in some way."

Captain Nevitte sprang to his feet and paced the floor in considerable excitement for a few minutes.

Then he said sternly:

"Report yourself at once as under arrest, Mr. Cassiday!"

Claude bowed and retired to obey the order.

Then Captain Nevitte sent for the ship's paymaster and asked him how much he had paid to Claude Cassiday upon the last pay-day.

The figures were given him, and the paymaster was sent to command Claude Cassiday to turn over the cash he then had in hand.

He obeyed without a word, and after the captain and paymaster had been together for several hours, the former cried excitedly:

"My God, he is a thief!"

"His buccaneer life utterly demoralized him, for these figures prove that he robbed that belt to pay Brackett, Telfair and Dorsey, for he went to his state-room to get this money."

"This is terrible, paymaster, terrible, and the fellow must be at once dismissed the service."

"Yes, sir, though I can hardly believe Cassiday guilty."

"Nor would I but for the proofs against him."

"I shall at once sail for Marseilles, where I was to join the flag-ship, and see that Cassiday has instant trial, while I shall take it upon myself to return his decorations to the countries they came from as having been presented to one unworthy to wear them."

"If he is proven guilty, sir."

"He can only be proven guilty, paymaster, for the proofs are against him," was the stern response of the captain whose sense of honor was cut to the quick by this dishonor coming upon Claude Cassiday.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A TARNISHED NAME.

THE flag-ship was found, the court-martial convened, and Claude Cassiday was tried on the proofs against him of most dishonorable and disgraceful conduct.

Of course it was a foregone conclusion, as all said, that he would be found guilty, and he was

dismissed the service, as he was found guilty upon all the charges named against him.

He pleaded his own case and had no proofs to offer.

But he was pre-judged and the commodore of the squadron approving the findings of the court he was dismissed in disgrace from the service.

Captain Nevitte at once wrote the facts of the case to the widow of the merchant captain, sending to her the money found in the possession of the disgraced officer, and also did he communicate with the Governments which had honored Claude Cassiday with decorations, making known that the young officer thus honored had proven himself unworthy to wear them.

The blow fell upon Claude Cassiday with crushing force, and he left the ship by night.

But pitying eyes followed him, the eyes of the crew who had learned to love him and who did not believe in his guilt.

And there were officers too who felt that against all circumstantial evidence shown of guilt, the young sailor was guiltless.

Searle Sanford was true as steel to the last and said:

"My dear Cassiday, I believe in your innocence, and I shall keep my eyes open I assure you, to prove it if it is possible."

"I know that you have no money, so let me beg you to accept this as a loan, paying me back when you can."

Claude was deeply touched by the friendship of his friend, but replied:

"Yes, I have my last month's pay which the paymaster handed me."

"I thank you for your trust in me, and now bid you good-by."

"But what is a month's pay?"

"All I need, thank you," and Claude Cassiday grasped the hand of Sanford in farewell, for he had gone in charge of the boat that put him ashore.

And the crew raised their caps in silent respect and were not reproved by their young officer, as he gave the order to give way for the ship.

Standing on the wharf by his kit, dressed as a common sailor, Claude Cassiday stood watching the boat as it returned over the moonlit waters, and then said in a voice that quivered with deep emotion:

"So fades away my hope of a life of honor in the service of my country."

"So perishes my ambition, for hope is dead within me now, utterly dead."

He shouldered his kit and strode away toward a sailor's inn.

In his life among the buccaneers he had learned to speak French and Spanish fluently, and he had no difficulty in making his way in a foreign land.

Seeking the inn he obtained a room, and taking writing materials from his trunk wrote two letters.

The first one was to the wife of the merchant captain, Mrs. Horace Varney, Gloucester, Massachusetts.

It was as follows:

RESPECTED MADAM:—

Doubtless by the mail that brings you this letter you will receive one from Captain Nevitte, late my commander, telling you that I was found guilty of betraying the trust your husband placed in me, by robbing you of the money intrusted to my care.

"The belt will be sent you with five hundred dollars, which went to aid in the proof of my guilt, leaving the balance to be accounted for."

"To you I hold myself in honor and duty bound, and, if my life is spared, every dollar of that money you shall receive."

"I could send it to you by a demand upon my mother, but I will make no such demand, depending wholly upon earning the money which I am to pay you."

"Herein I send you as an earnest of my good intention a draft of fifty dollars, and before very long I hope to forward you another installment."

"I have the honor to remain,

"Your unfortunate and obedient servant,
"CLAUDE CASSIDAY."

The other letter was for his mother and was wrung from the depths of his heart.

"MY OWN DEAR MOTHER," he wrote:—

"My last letter prepared you in part for trouble, bidding you to expect the worst."

"I now write you to tell you that the worst has been realized, for I have been found guilty by the court-martial and have been dismissed a dishonored officer from the service I loved so well."

"I was 'found guilty' of having gotten on a drunken carousal ashore, gambling away my decorations, watch and chain, and losing so much money that I betrayed the trust imposed on me by a dying man, the merchant captain of whom I wrote you, and to pay my debts robbed his widow of the gold intrusted to my care."

"Such were the charges and I was found guilty of every one."

"I was dismissed and ordered away from the ship by night."

"I went, but there were some who believed in my innocence, and thank God for it!"

"I am now writing at an inn on the French coast, and have just finished a letter to Mrs. Varney telling her I hold myself in honor bound to pay her every dollar due her, and until then, my dear mother, I can send but little home if anything; but though I know that you have ample for your needs and Helen's."

"My decorations were returned to the donors."

"The court-martial decided that they had no claim over them, but I begged Captain Nevitte to return them, and with each I sent a letter protesting my innocence and expressing the hope of one day proving that I was sentenced unjustly."

"But tribunals show no mercy, and few judge by law, for circumstantial evidence proves against all reason."

"To you and my sister Helen I make no claim of innocence, for you know both of you that I am not guilty."

"More I need not, cannot say: but I will seek a ship to-morrow, going as mate if I can, seaman if I must, and to whatever port I sail I will write you."

"I will not put foot upon the soil of my native land, rest assured, until I can pay to Mrs. Varney every dollar of the money that was left for her in my keeping by her husband."

"With all love, for yourself and Helen, and the promise that this blow, bitter, cruel as it is, shall not crush me,"

"I remain, your devoted son,
"CLAUDE CASSIDAY."

CHAPTER XIX.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE.

We left Captain Kent the Buccaneer making his way northward by easy runs.

He did not care to be seen, so took to hunting a secure hiding anchorage by day and sailing by night.

Of course this was tedious work, but for this the buccaneer did not care, for as Boston was his destination, he was anxious to disguise himself by a full length beard ere he ventured into the home of his boyhood, where there were many who would recognize him except for such a change in his appearance.

The provisions at last began to run low, and so he ran in to a river on the coast near a seaport, hid his vessel securely, and started upon foot for the town.

He could purchase his provisions, bring them by wagon to a spot near his boat, and thus attract no attention as he would by running in alone in his little craft and have to give an account of himself.

He was a man of caution, so securely hid in the woods his belt of gold and jewels, taking only enough money to purchase his stores, in case he should be arrested and searched.

He had gone but a short distance through the woods, when he came to a sudden halt.

There in the bushes he beheld a human form. It was a man and he was dead.

He had evidently been dead for a day or more, and in his back was a bullet wound.

Captain Kent saw that he had fallen there and died all alone; but he discovered that the man had a bag by his side.

To his delight he found that its contents were money and jewelry of considerable value.

Anxious to get away from the spot he hid the contents of the bag about his person and hurried on.

Though he had been careful to bury his own treasure the thought to do the same with this one did not enter his mind, so glad was he of the find he had made.

He arrived in the town from a country road, and he soon saw that he was an object of interest to more than one person.

At length he found the store he wished, where he could make his purchases, and was proceeding to give his orders when from behind him came the stern command:

"Surrender! or you shall die!"

Kent the Buccaneer was no coward, and his nerve never deserted him.

To resist there meant certain death, so he turned coolly and said:

"Why am I a prisoner, sir?"

"You know well enough," was the blunt reply of the constable, and his companion quickly clasped irons upon the buccaneer.

"This is an outrage; but I offer no resistance as you will soon find out your mistake," he said.

"There is no mistake, for you are a sailor by your dress, bearded and a stranger here, and just such a fellow as you are has been robbing the planters' houses about here of late, and I am sure you are the man."

"Come with me."

He could not resist, so was led away to the jail, searched and found to be well armed, while the valuables he had taken from the dead man were found upon him.

He was about to say that he was a shipwrecked sailor, that his boat was a few leagues away, and that he had taken the things from a dead man he found in the woods, when it flashed upon him if he did so, the very fact that his craft was so securely hidden, and that the man he had found in the thicket was in sailor garb, would condemn him as his comrade whom he had murdered.

If it was believed that he had murdered his mate then they would hang him, while as a robber he would be sent to prison.

So he held his peace, and made no denial.

It soon became known that the robber of several plantation homes had been captured, and the planters readily identified their belongings, found upon the prisoner, and he was held for trial.

Of course his denial of guilt would do no good, though he pleaded "not guilty," and the

trial could end but one way, for circumstantial evidence was thoroughly against him.

So he was sentenced to five years in prison, and the heart of the buccaneer ached bitterly as he felt himself behind iron bars and surrounded by stone walls.

"If they only knew who I was, how gladly they would have my blood," he muttered as he went to his lonely cell that night.

But they did not know, nor suspect, and the famous rover was simply regarded as a common thief, one who had entered house after house successfully, but, as they supposed, nearly lost his life at the hands of a planter who had fired upon him at close quarters.

The shot of the planter had been well-aimed, as the reader knows; but Kent the buccaneer had been over a year behind prison walls before the body of the real burglar was found by a party of huntsmen one day.

And no one connected the skeleton form of the man found in the woods with the robberies of the plantations, and the mystery of his death remained a mystery still.

Often did Kent the Buccaneer congratulate himself that he had hidden away his own treasure, for the thought of escape was his hope by day and night.

No man in the prison behaved better, and he readily won the regard of his keepers until at last he was allowed many liberties which the prison officials had come to regret, for one morning the dead body of the night watch was found in the cell of the buccaneer, and the prisoner had escaped.

Other prisoners had heard him groaning, and he had called to the guard that he was very ill, and he had entered the cell.

That was all that was known, other than that the next morning, "Kenton," as he had given his name, was missing and with him four other prisoners serving a life sentence, for he had not gone alone.

An alarm was given and the country was aroused far and wide to go upon the track of the prisoners.

But not a track could be found to guide them.

CHAPTER XX.

THE ESCAPE.

THE prisoners who had heard the groans coming from the cell of the buccaneer had spoken truly, for he had laid his plot well.

Not for an instant was he suspected as meaning treachery, for he had come to be trusted most thoroughly.

But while winning favor with his keepers he was plotting his escape.

He had picked out among the prisoners four bold, reckless fellows who were under a life sentence.

He meant that they should go with him, not for their own sake, but to be sacrificed in case of need to save himself.

This they did not suspect, but supposed he intended to help them for their own sake.

He had arranged his plot well, had told them to make shoes out of their blankets, which would leave no tracks, and to be on the alert at a given time.

The guard was called by a prisoner who heard the groans coming from the buccaneer's cell, and finding that he seemed to be suffering greatly he unlocked the door, set down his lantern and entered.

As he did so his throat was caught in a grip of iron and a couple of sharp blows were dealt upon his temple that ended his life then and there.

Pretending to carry on a conversation the while, the buccaneer drew off the guard's clothes and put them on, pulled his hat over his eyes, and taking up the lantern walked quietly down the corridor to the alley in which were the cells of the four life prisoners.

Their doors were unlocked and they were told to follow, the buccaneer leading, the weapons of the dead guard in his hand.

They passed out of the prison into the yard, the keys carried by Kent unlocking the gate and locking it behind him, and the five men were free.

This buccaneer led the way, each man carrying a small bundle of food they had saved out of their daily supply.

Rapidly toward the direction where, nearly three years before, he had left his boat in hiding, went the buccaneer, and he made no mistake in reaching the spot.

There lay the boat, the trees overhanging her, vines having even bent down and coiled about her mast, and it was very evident that no one had discovered her presence there.

The moon was shining brightly, and bidding the men release the boat from her surroundings, the buccaneer walked away to where he had placed his booty in hiding.

It was there, and the leather belt was quickly bound about his waist.

He had hidden it for a few hours only, and what had not happened to him since then, for years had gone by.

He returned to find his companions had released the boat from her hiding-place, but they found her leaking and in wretched condition, while the sails were in rags.

"She will do, for the water can be pumped out, and the leak we can stop after our safety is assured."

"As for sails I have canvas below that we can soon bend in, so let us get out of this at once."

Fortunately two of the escaped men had been sailors, and first-class ones too, so that the buccaneer had able aid in his work.

The sweeps were gotten out, and while two men rowed them one kept at the pump and the other two dragged out the sails stored in the little cabin, and which, fortunately for the fugitives, were not in a very bad condition.

By the time the sea was reached a mainsail and jib were bent on, and the boat was nearly free of water.

Up the coast the little craft was headed, across the entrance to the seaport from which they had escaped, and the dawn found the fugitives leagues away in their flight.

A hiding-place was sought inshore for the day, and at night the flight was continued, but the buccaneer did not dare stand far out, as the boat was in a dilapidated condition, and he feared to trust her in a storm.

Thus the flight continued, night after night, until one day a fishing-smack was sighted off Cape Fear.

It was a pretty craft of thirty tons burden, and her crew of a dozen men were out fishing in their skiffs from a mile to a league away from their vessel.

The fishing-craft was fully five miles off-shore, and night was coming on, so the buccaneer said, quietly:

"Men, that must be our craft, for we have been out of food now for a day, and yonder vessel must be well stored."

"I see but one man on her deck, and we'll run her aboard."

He steered closer in toward the fishing-craft, and as he came near suddenly luffed sharp and laid his boat alongside.

In an instant they were on the deck of the craft, and the one occupant was hustled on board of their boat, the anchor was gotten up, sail set, and the captured vessel was bounding along before the crew in the distant skiffs realized what had happened.

The topsail and a flying jib were set, and as the wind was blowing fresh, and in their favor, the little sloop fairly flew along over the waters.

Provisions in plenty were found on board, with quantities of fish, and feeling that his fortune was made, the buccaneer chief, after examining the larders, stood straight out to sea, intending to run the land out of sight and run for New York Harbor.

"We can sell the craft there, lads, and buy another that will carry us down the coast, for I do not care to have stolen property in my keeping, for we are honest coasters, you know, and Boston is our destination," and the buccaneer smiled, as he added, "I have some particular business to attend to then, lads."

CHAPTER XXI.

UNDER FALSE COLORS.

PRETENDING to have an affection of the throat, the last year he was in prison, the buccaneer had been allowed to let his beard grow. When he left the prison therefore he had a long and silken beard which gave him a very *distinguish* appearance.

The four convicts whom he had saved from a living tomb, looked up to their leader with marked respect, for Kent was a commander of men, there being a magnetism about him which drew them toward him inevitably.

Now they were willing to yield to him in everything, and not a man of them but believed that he was innocent as he said, and had been falsely imprisoned.

Holding out to sea Kent had after a couple of weeks' run entered New York Harbor at night and sought a secluded anchorage in East River.

He was somewhat acquainted with New York City, and his first desire was to sell the fishing-smack and purchase a new craft.

He did not wish to delay in this, fearing some vessel coming in from Wilmington and having learned of the capture of the little vessel might recognize her.

It did not take him long to dispose of the vessel, and with a little more money added from his own supply he purchased a fleet little schooner which had been built as a pleasure craft, but which the owner would sell at a bargain as winter was coming on.

Pretending to be a Carolina planter, Kent rigged himself out as such and got his crew a neat uniform, after which he set sail for Boston.

He entered Boston harbor after a rapid run, which delighted him with the great speed and stanch qualities of his little vessel, and sought a secluded anchorage there as in New York.

Every particle of Boston and its harbor were known to him, and he told his men that his plan was to play the Southern planter there, and that he would pay them well for their services, and they were more than content, for the life suited them far better than being in prison and hopeless.

So Captain Kent went ashore to a fashionable hotel, and the next morning attracted consider-

able attention by his striking and very distinguished appearance.

He was dressed in a suit of the finest black broadcloth, wore the finest of ruffled shirts, with a silk scarf in which sparkled a diamond of great size and beauty, while his head was covered with a soft, gray sombrero.

Upon the little finger of his right hand was a ring in which was set a blood-red ruby, a beautiful match in size and value for the diamond pin in his scarf.

The waving hair fell upon his shoulders, and the long, brown beard was the envy of every man who beheld it.

Certainly he was a very handsome man, with extremely courteous manners, a low, musical voice, and a manner of languid laziness about him that was very attractive.

He gave his name as "Claude Kenton," his residence as "Carolina," and his occupation as "planter."

Not one of his old crew would have known him, and in the splendid-looking stranger not an official of the prison could have identified him as the man who had so cleverly escaped from their clutches.

He went on board his schooner, which he called his yacht *Dreadnaught*, and not one of the escaped convict crew could believe their eyes when he told them that he was their captain.

Of course, such a distinguished stranger could not remain long in the city and not have callers, who extended to him the hospitality of their homes; but he pleaded being in mourning for his father, who had recently died, and had only taken a sea voyage for his health.

He looked the picture of health, but if he said he was ill, he must know, and so he was not urged by the very hospitable people of ever hospitable Boston to go upon the round of gayeties they had planned for him.

Of course the money which he had, and which his gems would bring, would not allow of great extravagance long, and this Kent knew full well.

He had come to Boston for a purpose, revenge being his inner motive; but he had lost his ill-gotten fortune, he was yet young in years, and he must seek to gain riches in some way, and what better way for him than by outlawry.

He was assured that his disguise was safe, that his false colors would never be known, and he laughed to himself as he knew that only a few years before he had boldly captured a Spanish vessel, put some of his own men on board, and running her into port, had sold her, cargo and all, pretending to be her owner and captain.

"What I have done in the past, I can do in the future," he said to himself.

He did not know but that he might find there some suitable craft which he could cut out and sail his scarlet-winged flag over once more.

But he knew that it would be no easy task to get a crew there in the good town of Boston.

In New Orleans or Havana he could readily get a hundred cut-throats to man a vessel to sail under the black flag, but not in Boston.

He therefore must first discover what had become of the boy who had been the cause of his downfall.

He knew where his mother lived, when he was in Boston before, and so one afternoon took a stroll in that direction.

"Who lives in that elegant house, sir?" he asked of a gentleman as he came in front of the mansion of Harold Hartwell.

"Commodore Harold Hartwell, sir," was the answer.

He knew that it had been the Hartwell home, and now he learned that his old foe had become a commodore.

"Is he at home, sir?"

"No, he is absent now upon a cruise with his squadron; but his daughter dwells there, and a beauty she is too, while she is said to be the richest heiress in Massachusetts."

"Indeed!" and thanking his informant he passed on muttering to himself:

"Why should I not make money out of the commodore through his beautiful daughter?"

CHAPTER XXII.

THE WITCH OF THE CLIFF.

THE disguised buccaneer moved on in his walk, holding his way along the ridge road which overlooked the harbor and bay.

He recalled vividly how he had taken that same walk when last in Boston, at the time he had run the Spanish brig in and sold her, and had then met she that was Helen Marcy, the one woman he had loved.

She had recognized him, charged him with being a buccaneer, but not one word had he uttered to tell her that her boy had been his protegee.

Now the impulse was upon him to see her again.

He wished to risk her recognition of him, to know all about her and her son, who had begun life so bravely after his earlier education upon a private deck.

As Mrs. Cassidy had scorned him, so meant Kent, the Buccaneer, to be revenged upon her through her son, to whom he owed his misfortunes.

He held on his way to the end of the ridge, where had stood the pretty little Cassidy cottage.

He saw it ahead, and walked leisurely on until he observed that the windows were closed and a chain was around the gate.

There was an air of desertion about it and it seemed to have been long unoccupied.

So he hastened on and stopped before the gate.

Grass was growing among the flower beds, and dust was upon the front piazza, while every blind was closed.

Some distance away on the cliff stood a humble cottage, and here he saw a woman seated on the porch.

So he crossed the meadow to the little house and politely raising his hat asked:

"Will you tell me where the Cassidy family has moved to. They are old friends of mine, and I would like to find them."

The bearing of the stranger and his very courteous manner seemed to impress the woman favorably.

Her house was a small one built of logs with a piazza across the front and located upon the point of the ridge, while scrub pines surrounded it.

Upon one side the meadow stretched away to the ridge road, and upon the other the steep hill descended to the shore.

A grand view was therefore obtained from the cabin, and as there was a staff rising above the house, on which floated a flag with a strange device, Captain Kent inferred that it was a signal station of some kind.

The woman was seated in a chair the appearance of which somewhat startled the buccaneer. It was made of human bones, two skulls surmounting the posts, and the whole work had been most artistically done.

The arms of the chair were the arm bones of a human being, with the skeleton hands at the end, and the legs were likewise made of the leg bones, with the feet at the end.

Upon one of the skulls over her head perched a raven, black as night, but with his beak and claws painted blood-red.

This bird of evil omen croaked dismally as Kent approached.

Upon the other skull was a parrot as beautiful as a rainbow in hue, and that he was no reader of human nature was evident from his words, for he kept repeating as the buccaneer approached:

"Good man! good man!"

Upon one side of the woman sat a snow-white cat, while a jet-black cat was upon the other side—both animals being of enormous size and noble looking.

On the mat in front of the door was a huge Siberian blood-hound, about whose neck was a collar of long sharp nails that added to his fierceness of aspect.

But the woman's appearance was the more striking, for her hair was fiery red and bound in large braids about her head like a crown, while her complexion was of deathlike whiteness and her eyes large, black as night and shaded by the longest of dark lashes.

Beautiful she certainly was, but it was a beauty at once weird and appalling.

Her dress was of black velvet, her form graceful, and about her waist was a belt of iron links.

Not a piece of jewelry did she wear, and her make-up was somber and plain in the extreme.

"Yes, I can tell you of the Cassidays," she answered in a voice of strange sweetness, turning her impressive eyes full upon the face of the buccaneer.

"You will oblige me greatly if you will, madam," and Captain Kent was earnestly scrutinizing the strange woman and her repellent surroundings.

"They have moved away."

"And where have they gone?"

"I have not consulted my chart of the earth and the stars to find out, but I can do so if you wish."

"Ah! then you are mistress of the Magic Art?"

"I am called a witch."

"Indeed! But I have no faith in witches' ghosts or magicians."

"You are a strange man then, for few dare deny the facts and proofs of a witches' supernatural powers."

"I have had no proof and do not conceive that they exist."

"Do you wish to be convinced to the contrary?"

The buccaneer hesitated, for, in spite of himself, he had his moments of superstition—as what sailor has not?

The woman was gazing into his face with those wonderful eyes as though she would read his very soul, and he unconsciously shrunk away before their scrutiny.

But casting off all fear he said:

"Yes, give me proof."

She glanced upward and asked:

"Can you see the flag that waves aloft?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"A green field with a representation of that hideous raven there in the center."

"Well watch the staff for a flag that will prove to you that I can read the human soul."

She arose and went into her cabin as she spoke, and from within she hauled down the green flag through a trap in the roof.

A moment after there went up a roll of black bunting which when shaken loose brought a startled cry from the lips of the buccaneer.

The witch had raised his own flag.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WO-TON-KA.

THERE, at the top of the flag-staff floated the black flag with its scarlet wings, which Kent the Buccaneer had made a terror upon the seas.

It was no wonder that the pirate was startled at this unexpected warning to him that there was much in the Black Art, for she certainly had read his soul.

His face paled, and for a moment a wicked look came into his eyes, as though the feeling was upon him to spring upon the woman and end her life then and there.

Whatever his intention however it was quickly checked, for the parrot suddenly screamed out:

"Don't! Murder!"

The raven croaked most terribly, and raising his head the huge dog gave forth a long, dismal howl.

Then the woman appeared in the door and said to the now thoroughly startled man:

"See, even my dumb slaves had your thoughts, Captain Kent."

"Why do you call me by that name?"

"Because you are Kent the Buccaneer."

"Nonsense."

"Have you such strong proof that you are not, you are willing to let that flag remain there until the authorities send and ask why I have raised it, and I must answer that Kent the Buccaneer is in town?"

"You are a remarkable woman."

"Haul down your colors!"

"Do you haul down yours?" was the significant response.

"Yes."

"You are wise," and stepping into her cabin she hauled down the flag which had so startled the buccaneer.

But immediately after another went up in its place.

It was a red field in the center of which was a black gallows.

"My God! Why do you raise that?" he asked as the woman reappeared at the door.

"As a warning, simply, that you must heed to avoid such an end."

"You seem not unfriendly toward me?"

"I am your friend, and as such I warn you against again becoming a pirate, else you will die at the yard-arm."

"How know you that I am not one now?"

"You are put down as dead, lost at sea in your vessel, and your name has been unknown upon the seas for several years."

"Why have you come here now?"

"Find out through your black art," he said impulsively.

"I need hardly consult my chart with your face before me."

"Well?"

"Revenge has brought you here."

The man started, his face became livid, while he hissed forth:

"Woman, you are a wonder."

At this the parrot laughed in a hideous way.

"Now you wish to know about the Cassidays?"

"Yes."

"You say they are your friends?"

"Yes, and I would find them."

"When did you last hear of them?"

"Over four years ago."

"You do not know then that young Claude Cassidy was dismissed from the navy?"

"No! no! I had not heard of this; but why?"

"He followed your training but too well and was accused of stealing money intrusted to his keeping."

"Accused, yes, but not guilty."

"That boy would never steal any more than I would."

The woman burst forth in a loud, ringing laugh in which the parrot joined, the raven croaked and the dog barked.

"What! a pirate, not steal?"

"Well, if he is to be judged by your standard, Kent the Buccaneer, he was doubtless guilty."

"See here, woman, I am a pirate, yes, but I never would betray a trust, rob a poor man, or become a pickpocket."

"Every dollar I earn, it is at the cannon's mouth, pistol's muzzle or sword's point," and the buccaneer spoke indignantly.

"Well, I believe that is true of you; but the boy was dismissed from the service for taking money intrusted to his care."

"And where is he now?"

"A wanderer."

"He is not at home with his mother and sister?"

"No, he became a wanderer over the face of the world, and misfortune dogged his steps."

for his mother sold her home here and moved away."

"Whither?"

"I do not know, and only my chart could tell me; but why bound them down now for revenge when they have suffered so?"

"I would help them if in distress."

"Yes, fatten them to kill in the end."

"But why are you here?"

"I also am in distress, without a ship and friendless, and I would better my future."

"Do not again raise your scarlet-winged flag to do so, or your days will end at the yard-arm—I read that much."

"Do you practice your art here?"

"Yes, to those who come for my teachings."

"Will you accept this gold for your services to me?"

"No, keep your gold and when you have decided upon your course, come to see me again."

"Remember, do not embark on any voyage until you have seen me, for I am your friend, Kent the Buccaneer."

"I almost believe you; but haul down that infernal flag there," and he pointed to the one in which was the gallows.

"I will, and hoist another for your benefit."

"For my benefit?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"Wait and see."

"First tell me if we have met before?"

"You have never before met the Witch Wo-ton-ka."

"Is that your name?"

"Yes."

"What does it signify?"

"Reader of Mysteries."

He raised his hat and turned away, and glancing back again beheld a blue flag in which was a red anchor.

"That bids me hope," he muttered as he went on his way, deeply impressed with his visit to the mysterious dweller on the cliff.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A STRANGE MEETING.

THE buccaneer had returned to his hotel by another way than that by which he had gone.

He seemed to know the city perfectly and wended his way by a stately stone mansion standing in the midst of spacious, ornamental grounds.

"And there I was born, that was my home," he mused as he stood gazing at the place.

"I was a happy boy then, but it was not in me to be good, and I made my parents and sister very unhappy."

"My father and mother are asleep in the churchyard now, and my poor sister has known much of sorrow."

"She was living in poverty when last I was here, for I took her all, and it was but just that I should purchase for her a home, giving her an abiding place and an income which that Jew was to pay regularly through a lawyer."

"I will go by the little house and see if she still dwells there, or has been defrauded, for I have little trust in man."

"To-night I must go and see the Jew, Moses Gripstein."

He walked on slowly, soon after turning into a narrower but pleasant street.

He came upon a small but cozy cottage, with vines trailing over the porch, flowers in the yard and a thoroughly homelike look resting upon all.

"Yes, this is the place," and he stopped and regarded it almost unconsciously.

"Oh, that I dared to go in," he said.

"But I dare not meet her."

"She knows that I went to the bad, connects her own name, which I tarnished, with that of Kent, the Buccaneer, and believes me to be dead."

He had become so lost in thought that he did not hear a step, or see a form approaching until a voice asked:

"Do you wish to see Captain Deering, sir?"

He started, his face became crimson, then the blood receded leaving it very pale.

Before him stood a woman of thirty-six or seven, graceful in form, neatly dressed, and with a face that was very lovely, though sad in its expression, while the hair was white, but prematurely so.

"I—I—I was told that a lady lived here whom I might secure as a governess to go South in a planter's family!" stammered the pirate.

"No, sir, I live here; but who was it that you wished to see, for I may know her?"

"Miss Kate Curtis," he faltered.

"Indeed! who could have sent you here, sir, for I was Miss Kate Curtis, but am now Mrs. Daniel Deering."

He stood face to face with his own sister.

He had recognized her at a glance, yet she did not know him.

And she was not the old maid whom he had expected to find her, for when last in Boston he had seen her, though unseen himself by her.

And she had married Captain Dan Deering.

He knew the name well, for it was Captain Deering who had commanded Moses Gripstein's

yacht, in which Mrs. Harold Hartwell had gone to the Bahamas after the treasure, and he had captured the craft, and released her, as is known to the reader.

"It was also Captain Deering and this same craft which he had chartered a few years before, when he ran in with the Spanish brig as a prize, to take him and his crew back to his own vessel, the Red Wings, then lying in hiding up the coast, awaiting the return of her bold commander."

And it was this gallant old sailor, a widower, whom his sister had married.

And Captain Deering had certainly known that the woman whom he had asked to be his wife was the sister of Kent the Buccaneer, once known in Boston as "Wild Kent Curtis."

"I beg pardon, lady, but I have been misinformed."

"I hope you will excuse me," and the buccaneer raised his slouch hat, which he had pulled down over his eyes, and walked rapidly away.

He dared not trust himself longer in his sister's presence.

"What a handsome, striking looking man, and it appears that I have seen him before, yet it can not be."

"Who can have sent him to me as Kate Curtis, when I have been for two years married?"

"But he seemed so embarrassed at his mistake I really felt sorry for him."

"I must tell the captain of the little *contretemps*," and Mrs. Deering, with her basket of groceries upon her arm, entered the yard and disappeared within her pretty house, little dreaming the truth as to who the handsome stranger was.

Had she but known, how her heart would have bounded with joy and pain, for she believed her brother dead, yet with even the stain of piracy, she loved him still.

Since his last visit to Boston she had not known want, for one day a lawyer had sent for her, told her that it had been discovered that a remnant of her father's once large fortune had been found, consisting of a pretty cottage, with other property sufficient to bring her a good income.

She had no reason to doubt the story, and moved into the little house, took the monthly income, little dreaming that it was given by her brother's hand—that it was, so to speak, "blood money."

And hearing how Captain Deering had met the famous Buccaneer Kent, she had sought him out to know if he really was her wild brother, and became convinced that there was no mistake—Kent Curtis was really Kent the Buccaneer.

Thus meeting the handsome captain, Kate Curtis had been won by his kindness, while she had captured his heart, and did not say nay when he asked her to become his wife.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE MONEY-LENDER.

A MAN of patriarchal appearance, but with shrewd, cunning eyes, sat in a luxurious room engaged at a table in going over his accounts, for piles of money lay before him, and an iron box was upon the floor at his feet.

There was every evidence about him of a luxurious home, for a door opening upon one side led into an elegant parlor, from whence came a sweet, flute-like voice in song, which seemed to please, rather than disturb, him.

Soon the door leading into the hallway opened and a young man of twenty entered.

He had a Jewish face, dark, handsome and intelligent, and he was well dressed.

In his hands he carried a book and a basket. These he laid down upon a table and quickly took from the basket some papers and some money.

"Well, Emanuel, how was business to-day?" asked the elderly man in the Hebrew tongue, as the youth took a seat near him.

"Very good, uncle, as you will see by a glance over my report," was the answer in English, for the young man seemed not to care to speak in Hebrew if he could avoid it.

The old man also dropped into English, such as it was, and said:

"I was so glad."

"You wants to go out, maybe?"

"If you please, uncle."

"Vell, call your sisters to go over mit your reports."

The young man stepped to the parlor door and walked softly up to the one he found within there.

It was a maiden of twenty-two, exquisitely beautiful in face and form, such a beauty as one could adore.

She laid aside the Spanish guitar upon which she had been playing and said presently:

"Well, brother, work is over is it?"

"Yes, Zaphiel, and I am going out, so was going to ask you to run over my sales and cash for uncle."

"Certainly, Emanuel," and she returned to thier uncle's offices with her brother.

Emanuel at once excused himself and departed, while Zaphiel's deft fingers hastily ran over the cash and added up the sales.

Then she called all out and her uncle kept tally with the paper he held in his hand, for Moses Gripstein the money-lender required a strict accounting every night from his nephew.

"Dat vas goot, Zaphiel, so I puts t'e monish away as I vas finish mit my accounts und I wants to talk mit you, my tear."

"Well, uncle, what is it you would say?" and Zaphiel having put the money and papers in the strong-box, which was rolled to a closet set in the stone wall, the iron door of which was hidden by an imitation fire-place, stood by her uncle's chair.

She was dressed with modest elegance, though she wore rich jewels, and in her raven dark hair sparkled a diamond comb.

"Sit down, my tear, for I wants to tell you dat Jacob Goldmann asked me to-day for your hand."

"Why, uncle, he is an old man and hideous," said Zaphiel with a smile.

"He vas t'e richest Hebrew in America."

"I admit, uncle, that riches cover a multitude of imperfections; but if I marry I wish to love my husband, and I have never yet seen the man who has won my affections."

"Vell now dot vas strange, for I vas have friends here oftentimes."

"True, uncle, but I have not fallen in love with them, and until I do meet my fate pray let me remain here and care for you who have ever been so kind, so loving to me," and she bent over and kissed the forehead of her uncle.

"Vell, vell, have it so, if you vishes, my child; but Jacob Goldmann vas so very rich, and I guess he vas die soon and you would get all."

"I do not wish to count on a fortune, uncle, only through death."

"I will stay here and care for you."

"Vas you love me so much den?"

"I do, uncle, and so does Emanuel."

"You took us when little children, when we held no claim upon you, bade us call you uncle, and have been as kind as a dear, noble father, and we both love you dearly."

The old man bent his head for a moment and when he raised it tears were in his eyes.

At last he said, and he spoke in Hebrew in a slow, dignified manner:

"Zaphiel, what would you say if I told you that your brother has forgotten that he is a Hebrew and has fallen in love with a Christian maiden?"

"I would say, uncle, that we are all creatures of circumstance, and being human can not control our loves and hates."

The old man started at this and asked with eagerness:

"Then you do not condemn him, my child?"

"I do not, uncle; but who is the one that has won his heart?"

"The daughter of that proud woman to whom I sold my beautiful yacht which I named after you, and whose coffin it became."

"The daughter of Commodore Harold Hartwell."

"I have seen her, uncle, and she is so beautiful, possesses such a noble nature from all accounts, that I do not wonder that Emanuel loves her."

"Then too she is an heiress to a very large fortune."

"She vas, but Emanuel vas a fool, for through in his veins flows blood two thousand years old, she, who can look back but a few generations at best, would despise him."

"But he has seen her and her head is so turned that he told me that he loved her."

"And you do not blame him, my child?"

"No, uncle, he cannot master the promptings of his heart."

"Zaphiel, your words have opened my pent-up heart, and I will tell you a secret."

"Sit there, my child, where I can see you," and the old Jew seemed deeply moved from some cause.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE JEW'S SECRET.

ZAPHIEL had never seen her uncle so moved before, and she quickly took the seat to which he motioned her.

It was where the light fell full upon her and yet shaded his face from her view.

After some minutes of silence he said, still speaking in the Hebrew tongue:

"Zaphiel, your words in regard to your brother embolden me to tell you a secret."

"It is a secret of my life, and one which I have never breathed to any one."

"You have said that you do not blame Emanuel for falling in love with a Christian maiden, one not of our people, and you have also told me that I have been like a father to you and your brother."

"You have, uncle, and so we have never missed our own father."

"The blessings of Abraham be upon you for those words, my child."

"But to my story."

"I came to this country when a young man. I had ambition in the old country of Poland, and my hope was to free our people; but there were traitors, and I was betrayed, arrested and thrown into prison."

"I was sentenced to death and twice was led

forth to execution, but fearing death was too good for me, that I should live and suffer, I was sent to Siberia as a life exile.

"I need not recount the horrors of that life of exile for five years.

"But I lived with one hope, and that was to make my escape.

"At last I did so, how it is too long a story to tell; but I escaped and found myself in Paris, where I had friends.

"There came a demand upon the French king for fugitive Poles in Paris, and I was suspected as one and the gendarmes were in search of me.

"It was in a hotel that I was living, and in this same house was an American artist's daughter.

"The artist was away, in fact had been absent for some time, and his daughter, from her room window, overheard the command to search the house and arrest me.

"She did not know me, had only seen me in the corridors, but knew that my room was next her own, and bounding to my door knocked and bade me seize what I valued and come with her.

"I obeyed, and in a few moments she had her father's studio jacket upon me, his cap upon my head, and bade me take a seat before an unfinished picture, brush and palette in hand.

"She had also placed upon my head a gray wig, used by her father for models, and there I sat.

"I heard the guards at my door, knew that they entered and searched for me, taking all with them that they could find.

"Then they came to her door and she arose and opened it.

"They asked about me, and she said that she did not know me, but was under the impression that I had hastily departed from my quarters, as she had seen me leave with some packages in my arms.

"They merely glanced at me and departed.

"Then she said to me that she was expecting her father by the Havre diligence that evening from the south of France and she would meet him at the office, say what she had done and ask him to go to other quarters, while she arranged for my escape from the country.

"She carried out her plans, and that night I left Paris in disguise, reached England and stayed there for a year.

"I wrote my fair preserver of my safety and received a letter from her telling me of her father's death, for he was a consumptive, and that she was coming to England to sail for America, where she had distant relatives.

"I met her upon her arrival, and as there was no packet-ship to sail for a couple of weeks, took her to the house where I lived.

"Need I tell you, my child, that I loved her, and, forgetting that I was a Hebrew, begged her to become my wife.

"She consented, and a few weeks after we were secretly married and sailed for America.

"I had some money left, and an uncle in Baltimore who wrote me to come to him.

"I did so, but I dared not tell him that I was married to a Christian woman, for he would have disowned me.

"So I kept my secret for several years, and then he died, leaving me his property.

"But just when I intended to acknowledge my beautiful wife before the world, she took suddenly ill, and in a few days she was dead.

"I was heart-broken, and settling up my business in Baltimore went to Philadelphia, and after a couple of years spent there I came to Boston, and I have prospered greatly, for, Zaphiel, Jacob Goldmann is not so rich as I am, and you are heiress to a large fortune, indeed."

"I, uncle?"

"My child, cannot you guess the truth? must I tell you that you are my own flesh and blood, that you and your brother Emanuel are my own children?"

The Jew had risen now, trembling from head to foot, and he held forth his arms as he spoke, telling the momentous secret to Zaphiel that she was his own daughter.

She sprung to her feet and threw herself into his arms, while she cried earnestly:

"My father! now I know why I have always loved you as a father, why I have always acted as though I was your own daughter.

"Oh! how happy I am, father."

And the Jew was too happy to utter a word.

His secret was told, and his daughter loved him.

He was a cunning man of business, a shrewd money-getter, and loved gold, but he had a heart after all.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MOSES GRIPSTEIN'S VISITOR.

AFTER awhile Zaphiel asked:

"Father, does Emanuel, my brother, know of the secret which you have told to me?"

"No, my child, and I shall keep it from him yet awhile.

"He expects now only a small share in my business, and I wish to see how he will work for that."

"Emanuel will behave all right, father, never fear for him; but I must continue to call you uncle, then?"

"Yes, my child, for the present."

"I will not forget, sir; but I fear Emanuel is doomed to have heart-aches, for the beautiful and rich Miss Hartwell does not even know him."

"And will not look at a money-lender's clerk, my child."

"I wish the boy did not love her; but there is a knock at the door."

"Who can it be?"

Zaphiel arose, went into the hall and descending to the first story where the Jew had his shop and office, opened the side door which led to his rooms above.

A gentleman stood there who instantly doffed his hat at sight of her, bowing low, while he said in a voice that was very soft-toned and gentle:

"Pardon, lady, but may I ask if this is the home of Mr. Gripstein?"

The query generally was, if it was the home of "Gripstein the Jew money-lender," as Zaphiel well knew.

But she responded politely, struck with the bearing and courtesy of the visitor:

"It is, sir."

"Is Mr. Gripstein at home, may I ask?"

"Yes, sir; will you walk in and give me your name?"

The visitor obeyed and handed her his card.

She observed that he was handsomely dressed, had the appearance of a man of the world, and wore a superb diamond in his scarf, and its match in a ruby upon the little finger of his right hand.

Moses Gripstein glanced at the card and said:

"Claude Kenton."

"Vell, if it vas pizziness he ought to comes py daytimes und to t'e shops."

"You had better see him, uncle, for he is a gentleman."

"Vell, ask him to walk up."

This Zaphiel did, bowing and retiring as she ushered the stranger into her uncle's presence.

The presence of the Jew, however, did not impress the visitor too deeply to cause him to forget his manners, for he turned, and bowing, said:

"I thank you, lady, and regret to have given you trouble."

Then Zaphiel departed, and Moses Gripstein said, sharply:

"You vas vants to see me?"

"Yes, sir."

"Vell, I vas have a office, and daytime vas t'e times for pizziness."

"Night time suits me best, Mr. Money-lender, and so I came to-night."

"I am glad to see you looking so well, for you have aged but little since last we met," and the visitor took the easy-chair vacated by Zaphiel.

"See here, mine fri'nts, who vas you, for I doesn't knows you at all," and Moses Gripstein became a trifle uneasy, for though a brave man in his youth, his wealth had made a coward of him.

"I chartered a vessel of you some years ago, to return to my vessel, sir."

"Oh Isaacs! You vas t'e dead mans! T'e pirates! T'e puccaneers!" groaned Moses Gripstein, in agony of soul.

"No, I am not a dead man, Friend Gripstein, and I am not now a buccaneer; but I was your old customer, Kent, and we had some little business together once, which I have come to inquire into, while I have also come to get a loan on some jewels that I have."

The manner of the buccaneer was calm, his face wearing a slight smile as he turned his piercing eyes upon the money-lender.

"Vell, you vas astonish me, for I thought you vas dead."

"Do I look like a dead man?"

"No; but it vas reported your vessels go down mit t'e rocks, and all t'e pirates vas drown-ed dead."

"There are exceptions to all rules, Mr. Gripstein, and I am the exception in this case."

"I did not drown, but I lost my ship, my crew, and my treasure."

"You have got nodings?"

"Oh, yes; I am not a pauper, as you will presently see."

"But now to the business between us."

"V'ot pizziness vos dat?"

"You remember that through you I purchased a home for my sister, and placed in your hands a sum of money to be paid to her as an income?"

"I remembers."

"I also placed in your hands a package which you were to open in case I did not return within a given time."

"Yes."

"That package you were to open and follow the directions within."

"Vell?"

"Those directions were to pay the highest price for the gems you found in the package, and place the sum at interest to be paid to my sister."

"Yes."

"Did you open the package when I did not return at the time specified?"

"I did."

"And what did you find?"

"Gems."

"What value did you place upon them?"

"Ten thousand dollars."

"You gave a good estimate, Mr. Gripstein."

"Yes, I thought you vas dead, and I knew your sister vas a poor woman."

"You have a heart then after all?"

"I don't know; but I vas just some time, and I vas unjust many times."

"And you gave the money to my sister?"

"Yes, through t'e lawyers who do t'e work, I pays her t'e monish, and den she vas go and get married to t'e captain of my yacht."

"She married a good man, I am glad to know."

"Yes; but what vas you going to do now, mine frient?"

"Go into partnership with you in the buccaneering business," was the cool response and it fairly startled Moses Gripstein.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE PIRATE'S PLAN.

"You seem startled, Gripstein?" said the buccaneer with a light laugh.

"I vas scared almost sick, dat you say I vas a puccaneer."

"I didn't say so, my friend, I merely said that I was going to have you as a partner in the buccaneering business."

"You see it is just this way Mr. Gripstein."

"V'ich vay?"

"Well, I am a pirate, as you know."

"I have had a great deal of experience in the management of a ship, in throat-cutting—"

"Mine gracious!"

"And in plundering a prize."

"Dat vas so."

"I have lost my ship and my fortune, barely having now a couple of thousand dollars to call my own."

"But with my experience and your aid I can make another fortune for myself and one for you too to add to the enormous wealth you now have."

"I vas not so rich."

"You do not know how rich you are, so I excuse your dodging the truth, Moses."

"But what I want is a ship, just such a craft as my beautiful Red Wings, and you can build her for me."

"Mine gootness!"

"You know who her builders were, and you can have her duplicated, except her armament which I can get."

"You can offer a reward to the builders, a bonus, if they can make her fleetier than was the Red Wings, though it will be hard to do."

"Mine fri'nt! mine fri'nt!"

"Don't get excited, Mr. Gripstein, but hear me through."

"While you are having a new vessel built I will go to the West Indies and ship my cut-throats."

"I will put them on a vessel, get what armament I need for my Red Wings, and return here and run out the sea beauty as soon as she is built for a packet and is all stored with provisions for a long voyage."

"Then, with you the owner of the vessel and I the captain, I will cruise the seas for booty."

"All I capture I will share with you halves, the balance going to expenses and the crew."

"Do you catch my idea, Mr. Gripstein?"

"Yes, I vas catch te idea, put I fears it vas result in me being hanged mit a rope."

"Oh no, I'll be the one to hang, and you need not be known in the affair."

"In fact you will have the sympathy of the people because Kent the Buccaneer ran off with your beautiful vessel just as she was ready to sail."

"I think you will be the gainer largely, for a couple of rich prizes will pay you back all the vessel will cost you, and after that it will be clear gain, for I believe you have no fear that I will cheat you?"

"No, I vas pelieve you vas more honest den a great many beoples. I knows, what prays and preaches."

"Yourself included; but, I do believe, in your way you are a square man, as you have certainly dealt honorably with me, though believing me dead and having it in your power to defraud me."

"I also know that you have secretly done some very charitable acts toward Christians, and I trust you wholly, Moses Gripstein, and expect you to do the same by me."

"I do, mine fri'nt."

"But if you feel that your share would be safer in other hands, I'll make your nephew an officer on my ship."

The Jew uttered a cry of alarm at this.

"No! ah no! mine fri'nt, you dont get no rope around t'e necks of dot poys—no sir!"

"Well, you know best; but what do you say, Mr. Gripstein?"

"Mine fri'nt, you vas take me all up in a heaps."

"I loves monish, yes, and I gets it in many ways I vas admits; but I have not yet haf a pirate vessels for mineself."

"I vill t'ink it all over and may be I can tells you v'ot I do if you comes soon again."

"Day after to-morrow evening I will come

again; but now let me have some money on these gems," and the pirate placed the little buckskin purse containing the gems, which were the remnant of his ill-gotten riches upon the table before the Jew.

Moses looked them over carefully and said: "If you don't want to use so much monish, take only a leetle."

"It was easier to carry dere, den monish." "You are right, Gripstein, so take these three and give me five hundred dollars."

The ruling passion in the man began to exert itself, for he said:

"Vell I don't gif you so mooch, but I gifs you—"

"Come, no nonsense with me, for we are to be partners."

"Those three gems will bring a couple of hundred apiece as you know at a glance, so give me what I ask."

"Vell, I will do it," and the money was counted out, the buccaneer placing it in his pocket along with the purse of precious stones.

"Thank you: now good-night, and I'll return on time."

The Jew escorted his visitor to the door, and when he returned to his room he beheld Zaphiel.

"I thought you had retired, my child," he said in Hebrew, for he always addressed her in that language.

"Not without your good-night kiss, my father. But who was that gentleman?"

"An old friend of mine, my child."

"That is the man I could love and wed!" came the response from the girl and the words made Moses Gripstein reel as though he had been struck a hard blow.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE HOME OF THE MONEY-LENDER.

THE startling confession of Zaphiel fairly frightened Moses Gripstein.

His daughter could love and wed a pirate? He gave an inward groan and sunk into his seat.

To his credit be it said Zaphiel had never been allowed even to suspect him of "shady" transactions, and not even his son, as the reader now knows Emanuel to be, suspected him of real wicked deeds.

Moses Gripstein had his secret agents, and if goods came to his shop for sale they came through these men, and Emanuel never suspected them of having piratical or smuggled goods.

He knew that the money lender often charged most exorbitant rates for loans, but then he took big chances of getting his money back, and frequently met with losses.

But for all this Moses Gripstein was getting very rich.

If he lost money it would be by the few hundreds, while when he made money it was by the thousands.

His shop was a spacious one, but no one ever suspected half the value it held.

The best people of the city were his customers, and to them also he made loans.

He was a man who knew the world and people, and he intended to get the best of life while he lived.

Above stairs his spacious rooms were furnished with a luxuriance that was princely, and he lived like a *bon-vivant*, but his servants were kept in an annex to themselves and there they served the meals to the family of three, only one, an old and faithful servitor, ever being allowed in the living apartments.

So the outside world never suspected the manner of living of the rich money-lender.

Zaphiel and Emanuel both had their riding horses, and they were noted as a wonderfully handsome couple.

Zaphiel had no intimate friends, made no visits, received none.

She had been educated away from home, and was intelligent and accomplished but her father and brother only knew the fact, and her pleasure was to amuse them.

Emanuel had a few friends, but they were never invited to his house, and he contented himself with visiting their resorts and a promenade with them.

He was admired greatly and people looked upon him and his sister as the heirs of the rich money-lender.

Such was the family and life of Moses Gripstein.

From a Polish soldier and patriot in his earlier years, a hero, he had developed in his later life into a money-getter.

It was his ambition to lead all of his race whom he knew in riches, and he had passed some time before the limit of Jacob Goldmann's wealth, a man who was an acknowledged miser.

When Zaphiel made the confession that Kent the Buccaneer was a man whom she could love and wed, Moses Gripstein knew not what to say.

But at last he gasped forth:

"He was so old as to be your fader, my child."

"He is a man of forty, I should think, uncle, and well-preserved."

"Certainly he is a man of superb physique and exceedingly handsome, while his manners

are as gentle as a woman's his voice musical and low, and he is my *beau ideal* of manhood."

Moses groaned.

He could not speak.

Then Zaphiel asked:

"But who is he, uncle?"

He dared not answer, for could he say that the man he had said was his friend, was a pirate?

Could he let his child know that he had dealings with one who was a terror upon the seas, the famous Buccaneer Kent?

This would never do, and so he could only hide the identity of his visitor.

"The gentleman is a Southern planter, and I heard of his being here in his yacht," he said, for he did not once connect the alleged planter of whom he had heard with Kent the Buccaneer.

"What is his name, uncle?"

"Claude Kenton; but how strange that you should be so interested in a stranger, my child."

"I never saw a man his like before, uncle," was the reply, and Zaphiel retired to her room, leaving Moses Gripstein food for reflection.

"She must not see that man again, for he is dangerous."

"Even I feel his magnetism, and he can wield me like a child; but he has proposed a plan I will not enter into."

"No, I cannot do that."

"I would trust him, yes, but then I cannot be the one to use my money to fit out a vessel to prey upon mankind."

"It means deadly combats, death to, oh! so many."

"It means misery untold to all, and perhaps in the end that he will be hanged to the yard-arm."

"I could not sleep at nights feeling that I had set this man afloat to kill and to rob."

"No, I will not do it; but I will propose a plan to him which I have often thought of, and which will mean no bloodshed."

"I will give him a vessel for this, and the result will pay far better."

"Yes, there will be no killing then, no death-blows, no shrieks for mercy to haunt my waking hours."

"Tis I will tell him of when he comes; but I will not send him forth as a pirate, will not give one dollar of my money to fit out a buccaneer craft to prey upon the helpless."

Thus mused the money-lender.

He was pacing up and down the room, and was deeply moved by the thoughts that surged through his brain.

It had been an eventful night to him, for he had made the confession of the secret he had so long kept locked up in his own heart, told his daughter that she and her brother were his own children, that their mother was a Christian woman.

Then had come the buccaneer chief and given him a startling surprise, and his bold proposition for him to become his partner in crime had followed.

Next had been the confession from the lips of Zaphiel, that she could love such a man.

It had been indeed a startling, exciting night for him, and he was wearied and anxious to seek rest.

At length came the step of Emanuel, then his entrance by a secret door, and he said pleasantly:

"What, up so late, uncle?"

"What time is it, my son?"

"Two o'clock, uncle, and late indeed for me; but I went on a sail on the bay and the wind almost left us."

"You look tired, uncle, and anxious; has aught gone wrong?"

"No, only I had a visitor who remained late, and I have been thinking over certain affairs."

"But to-morrow is the Sabbath Day so we can remain in bed until a late hour and rest."

"Please knock at Esther's room and say we will not breakfast until eleven."

"Good-night, my son," and the money-lender retired to his own luxuriously furnished room, leaving the handsome young Jew to do the same at his will.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE JEW'S PLAN.

THE buccaneer chief, as Planter Claude Kenton, still held sway at the hotel, where he had received the best of rooms and attention.

His vessel lay at anchor off the wharves with the crew of four men on board, and who were content with their life of idleness.

Sunday morning the schooner was seen to get under way and run down the bay, and the buccaneer captain held the tiller.

He was merely renewing his acquaintance with the channels for future use, if an occasion required him to enter the harbor of Boston.

Late in the afternoon he returned, and went to his rooms in the hotel, telling his crew that he would soon make a move of interest to them all.

Promptly on time he was at the Jew's house on Monday night, and though Moses Gripstein had told Emanuel that he expected a visitor, giving his name, who was to be shown up immediately, the young man was not quick enough to reach the private door before his sister, who

heard the knocker, and had overheard what was said to her brother.

There stood the same handsome man whom she had before met, and in his courtly way he said:

"I fear, lady, that I give you a great deal of trouble?"

"Oh, no, sir, I am glad to be of service to my uncle's friends," and she led the way up to the library.

Her uncle was there, and scowled as he saw that it was Zaphiel who ushered his visitor into his presence; but she quickly retired after saying:

"Mr. Kenton, uncle."

The buccaneer again turned and bowed, and then greeted the money-lender with:

"Gripstein, I do not know when I ever beheld a more beautiful face."

"It was pizziness ve vas to talks, mine fri'nt, I pelieves," sharply said Gripstein.

"Yes, but that does not alter the fact that I mean what I say, and I am a good judge of female loveliness," and the buccaneer threw himself into an easy-chair.

Moses Gripstein at once went to business, for he said:

"Vell, I vas not going to be one fool, captain, and make you go puccaneering again."

"Ah! you have so decided then?"

"I vas."

"Then you do not trust me?"

"Oh, yes, put I don't want no murdering pizziness for me."

"I would never sleep at nights for hearing t'e groans of t'e dead beetles you kills."

"I don't kill dead people, Moses, nor do dead people groan."

"Vell, dere ghosts vos v'ot vill troubles me and I von't do it."

"I don't ask you to serve as my lieutenant."

"Mein Gott! v'ot you says?"

"I wish your gold, not your aid as a fighter."

"Vell, if I gif gold, and it makes peobles get kilt, don't I vas guilty?"

"You give the gold and I'll do the killing."

"I don't give my gold for dat."

"Then you will not consider my plans?"

"No."

"Very well, some one else will."

"Put I hav a plans all myself."

"Ah!"

"Dere is a peautiful vessels here now, just finished and built for a smuggler-chaser."

"T'e builder didn't have her finished in time, so t'e Governments be puy a vessels, and the one I speaks of vas offer for sale, put t'e price is too pig."

"Well?"

"She is a leetle peauty and t'ey say she can outsail mit t'e vinds."

"Then she must be fast?"

"I thoughted I vas get her for coast packet, only t'e price vas so pig."

"Yes, but you say she is a small craft?"

"Sixty tons."

"What use can she be put to?"

"I tell you."

"Now don't you vas know dat t'e smuggling pizziness pays pig monish, and t'e risk is not so great."

"If t'e Governments catches you, you vas not have to hang but to go to brison, don't you know?"

"Yes."

"And dere vas no kelling pizziness in it, while t'e monish is easy got."

"Well?"

"Now if you want to pe captains of dat pont, I gif you t'e monish to puy her pretty quick, and you get your mens and make her a smuggler, don't you know?"

"Yes, I know."

"She is very fast, and you can sell your boat and I puy her for a coaster, and v'en you gets t'e smuggle goods and leave 'em at certain places, t'e coaster be prings 'em into port here and I sells 'em, don't you see."

"You have your blace upon t'e coast of Maine, v're it goot for smuggle pizziness, and ve make pig monish for each other, don't you vas understand?"

"Yes, I understand," said the pirate thoughtfully and for some minutes he sat in silence lost in deep meditation.

The Jew saw that his plan had made an impression and he said no more.

At last the buccaneer spoke, and decidedly:

"I like your plan, Gripstein, for it is a good one, and it will keep me near this city, where I have future business to look after."

"I accept your offer, so tell me where to find the vessel, so that I may have a look at her."

"The craft I have is a fleet one, so I'll test the speed of the other by her, and if she can outfoot her she's a good one."

"If not, I'll use the craft I have."

"Yes, yes, I'll give up buccaneering for smuggling, Mr. Gripstein."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE TEST.

THE little craft of which Gripstein had spoken, had been built by the same one from whose yard the Red Wings had been turned out.

In fact it was a miniature model of that beautiful brig, as far as her hull was concerned, but her rig was an innovation at that time in American waters, being a three-masted schooner.

Her extreme length for her tonnage, gave her a good space between her fore, main and mizzen masts, and she carried a mizzen sail that was enormous, with jibs of vast size, which the great reach of her bowsprit enabled her to do.

Her topmasts were nearly the same length as her lower masts, which would give her a chance of lower sails in rough weather, and topmasts housed, making her exceedingly stiff, while in a fair breeze she could spread aloft an amount of canvas that would drive her away at great speed.

Her bulwarks were high, as also were her bow and stern, and she sat like a duck upon the waters, while her depth gave her standing-up powers under pressure.

A wet boat she might be, but she would cut through the waves like a knife, stand up well, and could not be drowned when stripped for bad weather.

The nautical eye of Captain Kent took her in at a glance, and he was delighted with her.

He gave the builders to understand that he was a planter, wishing a swift yacht for himself, and when they named their lowest price for her at once said:

"I have a craft in port now, and if she can outfoot her down the wind and to windward I will take her."

The builder, with perfect confidence in his boat, was ready for the match and it was arranged for the morrow.

It was blowing great guns outside on the following day, but Captain Kent got under way and stood out to sea leaving the new vessel to follow.

He was determined to give her the benefit of a gale and an ugly sea.

He knew just what his own vessel, a trifle larger, could do, and he would put the other to a severe test.

Down the bay past Boston Light went Kent, and he lay to outside, awaiting the coming of the stranger, for it had been arranged that she was to follow him to a racing ground.

Soon she was sighted coming with a rush under lower sails only and nothing daunted she stood out into the churning sea in the teeth of the gale.

As she drew near Kent hoisted his "Def" and got under way, watching the stranger attentively through his glass.

He had up only his lower sails, which were about all his schooner could stagger under, and the two vessels jumped right into the seas coming in like mountains, in a dead heat to windward.

"By Neptune's beard, but she is going to pass us in a short while," cried Kent, and he trimmed close and had each one of his men at his post to get every atom of speed out of his schooner.

But the stranger not only outpointed him, going, it seems, into the very eye of the wind, but forged ahead at a pace that surprised the buccaneer and his men, who knew the speed of their craft.

It did not take Captain Kent very long to be following in the wake of the stranger, and he signaled to put back.

The strange wore round as though on a pivot, threw her sails wing-and-wing, and came tearing down astern at a wondrous pace. As she lapped the schooner of the buccaneer, having shown how readily she had picked her up before the wind, she broke out a huge drag sail, now known as a spinaker, and it seemed to lift her almost out of the water at times, while it sent her away from Kent's craft at a terrific speed.

As though to show the superiority of his vessel in every way, the builder suddenly ordered:

"Topsails aloft!"

The buccaneer's schooner was staggering along under all she could bear, and seeing the stranger change her course, throwing the gale over her quarter, and run up topsails, Captain Kent cried:

"Now he'll carry the sticks out of her or throw her over."

But to his surprise and delight the stranger stood the strain in splendid style, and went along through the wild seas at a wonderfully even pace.

Having shown her stanchness the stranger wore around and coming up astern of the buccaneer's schooner again lapped her, shortening sail as they ran astern to prevent her forging ahead.

"Well, sir, what do you think of my vessel?" cried the builder, who was delighted at the performance of his craft, as he knew that he had been sailing against a very speedy vessel.

"She will be mine when I reach the shore and can pay you for her," was the reply of Kent, and that night he was the owner of the pretty craft.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE EVIL SPIRIT.

WO-TON-KA the Witch of the Cliff, and the "Woman of Mystery," as she was often called,

held a strange influence among the people of the town.

She was not the accepted idea of what a witch should be, for she was no old, withered-up hag, but a young and beautiful woman.

She did not dress in any outlandish fashion, but instead her graceful form was neatly clad in black, and the gem-set comb in her black hair was the only ornament she wore, except the belt of iron links about her slender waist.

She had rented the cabin for a year, paying down for it good gold, and had fitted it up comfortably to suit herself.

From whence she had come no one knew, but one day she had been found occupying the cabin, which had been a favorite resort for those who went there to sit upon the piazza and enjoy the view.

Her flagstaff always floated some strange flag, and at night up went a black flag set with stars of gold and a crescent moon.

Those who watched her asserted that she had shown over a hundred different flags, all hoisted from within doors through a trap in the roof, raised and lowered by a pulley for the purpose.

Her huge dog, the parrot, raven and two cats of enormous size, one snow-white, one jet-black, were her only companions, and quite sufficient for company her neighbors thought.

There was no desire on the part of Wo-ton-ka to force herself upon the people.

She prophesied for those who sought her prophecies, told fortunes for those who asked her, but made no effort to render herself dreaded by any one, though she would not permit anyone to impose upon or disturb her when she wished to be quiet.

A growl of the huge hound was sufficient to drive away any intruder who did not like the name he bore, "Holdfast," any more than they did the cognomens bestowed upon the other pets of "Claws" and "Scratch" for the cats, "Ill-omen" for the raven and "Wizard" for the parrot.

They were a gruesome lot, and a weird mystery hung about the woman and her companions, her chair of human bones and her strange flags.

Those were the days of superstition, when sailors really dreaded sighting the "Flying Dutchman," and people ashore believed in witches, spooks and uncanny doings, which science has now turned such a glaring light upon of truth, that men are ashamed to-day of the superstitions of their grandparents who burned witches at the stake and fled from "ghosts" as creatures of reality, midnight prowlers from the grave.

So much for Wo-ton-ka the Witch of the Cliff, and who had startled Kent the Buccaneer by hoisting his scarlet-winged flag as a proof that she knew who he was.

After the visit of the buccaneer to her, she had seemed strongly moved from some cause. She had watched his departure with something of a longing look in her eyes, and when he disappeared had said firmly aloud:

"He will come again!"

Then she had remained silent for some time to again muse aloud:

"How strange that he should have crossed my path here! But, he will come again, for after his belief in my powers he will not sail without seeing me."

And the prognostication of the witch had not been wrong, for Captain Kent did visit her again.

The evening after his test of the Dreadnaught's speed with that of the new vessel, he sought the house of the money-lender.

As before he was admitted by Zaphiel, who seemed to know of his coming in some mysterious way.

"Vell, v'ot you t'ink?" asked Gripstein eagerly, alluding to the vessel which he knew he had had out on trial.

"She is the fleetest vessel afloat."

"Dot vas goot, so goot."

"And you bought her?"

"Y-es, I paid the builder the price I told you he agreed to take, and my schooner is for sale."

"I vill pay her, only I vill let somepody pay her for me."

"I understand."

"V'en vill you pe ready to go?"

"Within a week's time, if necessary, as the builder is making some changes to suit me on the new vessel, which I will give a name to that takes my fancy."

"V'ot vas t'e names, captains?"

"The Evil Spirit."

"Vell dot vas a strange names, mine frient."

"She will be an evil spirit of the sea, and I rather like the name, and am having a figure-head made for her to represent one of his Satanic Majesty's fallen angels, or my idea of one at least."

"You vas a strange mans, captains."

"Perhaps I am, for I have odd fancies, and I am swayed by both good and evil, but principally by evil."

"By the way, do you believe in witches?"

"V'iches?"

"Y-es, a woman who is a witch?"

"Oh! Vitcher vomans?"

"Y-es."

"Vell, 'dere vas a vitcher vomans in Boston."

"You know of her then?"

"She lif' upon t'e cliffs, and she haf' bad birds and vicked dogs and cats apout her."

"You have seen her then?"

"No, I vas never sees her, but my niece Zaphiel haf see her."

"Zaphiel! what a beautiful name."

"I vas say dat my nephew Emanuel vas see her."

"Ah! and does he believe in her power?"

"Vell he don't like t'e Vitcher Voman's a leetle bit."

"She certainly told me who I was."

"Oh Isaacs!"

"Don't be alarmed, for I am not, and I shall see her again, for I wish to ask a favor of her."

"A favor of a Vitcher Vomans?" said Gripstein with a look of horror.

"Y-es, I wish to ask her for an amulet of good luck; but now I am ready to receive your instructions, for we cannot go over them too often together, and there must be no mistake."

"No, no mistake," and Gripstein arose and took a roll of paper from his strong box.

One was a chart of the coast of Maine with certain red marks here and there upon it.

Another paper was a code of signals, while a third represented certain flags, evidently signal flags.

There was a code of lantern signals also and a list of names without doubt of vessels.

There was also a list of names of men and a number of written directions.

Spreading all out before the buccaneer Moses Gripstein said:

"Now, mine fri'nt, I gif you t'e instructions v'ot makes for us a fortunes."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

UNDER ORDERS.

"You vas a pirate, captains, so understands your pizziness," said Moses Gripstein by way of introduction to the paper before him.

"You vas see dat nobodys but yourself knows me in t'is pizziness."

"Ah! then you have been in the business of smuggling, friend Gripstein?" said Kent with a sly look at the money-lender.

"Let me tells you apout it, captains."

"I am all attention, sir."

"Dere vas some smuggler mans upon t'e coast of Massachusetts and Maine, and dey vas haf a poat and two dozen mens."

"Dey vas haf also an agent, a chief in Boston, put who he vas nopody's but myself knows."

"It was yourself."

"Ah! how you vas know dat?"

"I guessed it."

"Den I don't haf to tells you it vas so."

"I vas t'e chief, put I arrange my pizziness through agents in Boston, Portland and Portsmouth, so nopody's knows me, for t'e agents here I goes to see him mineself, and I veer a disguises dat make him not know me."

"Vell, dey sells t'e goods and it vas vork vell only dere vas not mooch monish for me in it."

"Den t'e captains of t'e poat he got caught mit his vessel, and he vas recognize as an old pirate mans, so t'e Governments hangs him, don't you see?"

"Oh, I see, and it is a cheerful story for me to hear; but go on."

"Vell, dey take t'e poat and put t'e other mens in prison."

"That was bad."

"But I haf another poat, and apout ten men under me who vas officers under t'e captains v'ot vas hung."

"They got scared and live very quiet on t'e coast, just here," and he put his finger upon one of the red marks on the chart of Maine.

"Now, I wants you to go dere, and tell dem you comes as captain."

"I understand."

"T'e officers maype vill not like dat very mooch, put I makes you captains."

"I don't care what they like or dislike, if you give me orders to take command."

"Vell, I gif you t'e orders, and I knows v'ot you vill do, for you vas not a mans to get scared."

"I don't think I am easily frightened, Mr. Gripstein; but how many men are there?"

"Twelve, mit t'e two officers."

"What are they doing?"

"Nodings put being like fishermans now."

"And I am to go there and make them a part of my crew?"

"Dat vas it."

"And these charts and instructions tell me just how to find them?"

"Y-es."

"And they have a boat?"

"Dey haf."

"What kind of a craft?"

"A sloop vessels."

"How large?"

"Not haf so large as t'e Evil Spirits as you vas calls your vessels."

"The men are armed?"

"Y-es, put smuggler mens don't fight, dey runs."

"I understand that, only I like to know where weapons can be had if needed," said the buccaneer, in a very significant tone.

"And you wish me to build up the smuggling business to pay well?"

"Dat vas it."
 "These are the list of men at the retreat?"
 "Dey vas."
 "And these are the names of vessels whose captains smuggle goods for you?"
 "Dat vas so."
 "And this is the list of the names of agents to whom I deliver goods?"
 "It vas."
 "And these marks?"
 "Vas v're dere vas soldier-mans in forts."
 "Ah! and these?"
 "V're de revenue cutters vas station."
 "I see, and I am sure I am beginning to understand the points fully."
 "I vas sure you vas."
 "You vas no fools, captains."
 "Thank you, Moses, and it's a compliment I can return in your case."
 "I vas glad," innocently said Moses Gripstein, but he knew that the compliment in the case of each was deserved.
 "Now let me ask you if the vessel that was captured was armed."
 "V'ot with?"
 "A cannon or two?"
 "Isaac and Jacob! Nol v'ot dey vant cannons for?"
 "As ornaments of course, for they look so much better you know, and a heavy gun is excellent ballast."
 The Jew either did not see, or did not wish to, the significance of the buccaneer's remark, for he replied:
 "Vell, you vas a goot sailor-mans and knows best."
 "Now tell me if your agents had not better get me a few more men?"
 "Dey vas make more expenses."
 "True, on pay-day, but then may save expenses at another time."
 "I would like to have an officer to command the sloop you refer to, one to guard the booty at the retreat where it will be kept awaiting shipment, and two on my own vessel."
 "The sloop should have six men, four more besides the officer should be at the retreat, and I must have no less than twenty men besides those I have now with me on my craft."
 "Mine gracious!"
 "These will make four officers and thirty-four men."
 "Oh, Abraham!"
 "You have already two officers and ten men, and I have four in my own crew, so there will be twenty more to ship and they must be of the very best material."
 "Vell, you knows."
 "Now give me the order making me chief, and letters to your agents directing obedience to me, and I can ask no more, while I will promise to make gold flow into your larders before very long."
 "Vell I believes d'ot you vill, captains."
 "I know it," was the confident reply of the buccaneer.
 "Vell, v'ot name vill you takes?"
 The buccaneer thought awhile and said:
 "Call me in those letters Black Brandt."
 "Put you vas not plack?"
 "I will be when they see me."
 "Vell, vell, you vas a strange mans," and the money-lender wrote the letters to his agents and officers, put a seal upon them, and affixed the name he was known by to the smugglers, that of "Conspirator," and Captain Kent had his orders.

CHAPTER XXXIV. THE ANCHOR AMULET.

"I KNEW it! There he comes!"
 It was Wo-ton-ka the Witch who spoke.
 She was seated in her grim Chair of Fate, and her eyes had fallen upon the tall form of the pretended planter, as he came along the beach, for he cared not to be seen going to the house of the Woman of Mystery.
 He reached the bottom of the cliff and beheld there a light surf-skiff drawn up beyond reach of the waters. A short mast, bowsprit and sails were in it, along with a pair of oars, and the emblem painted upon the boat showed to whom it belonged, for it represented a human skull.
 A path led up the cliff and this the buccaneer followed until he came out just in front of the cabin.
 He noted that the Woman of Mystery betrayed no surprise at seeing him, and raising his hat with the politeness natural to him he said:
 "Did you expect to see me again, Lady Wo-ton-ka?"
 "Yes, I knew you would come."
 "How did you know it?" and he gave a glance at the huge hound that was gazing at him as though he would like to spring upon him.
 "You would hardly start upon a voyage without seeking an amulet from Wo-ton-ka, for without me your life is in deadly danger each day and night."
 Hardly had the witch spoken when, with a savage yelp, the huge bloodhound sprang directly at the throat of the buccaneer.
 Quick as was the spring of the great brute

Kent was not caught off his guard, for his hand grasping the dog's throat in an iron grip the big brute was raised above his head and dashed to the ground with stunning force.

The cry of the witch was checked when she saw how readily her dog was mastered, for the amazed and now cowed brute at once retreated behind the hideous chair of his uncanny mistress.

"Come here, Holdfast! Come here, sir!" commanded Kent in a low, stern tone. The hound immediately crept cringing to the feet of the pirate, Kent placed his foot upon his neck, bent over and patted him, and the dog licked his hand in token of complete subjection.

"Well, I never would have believed from hearsay what I have just witnessed.

"That animal has never before shown fear or friendship for other than myself," said Wo-ton-ka, with evident admiration in tone and look.

"He was mastered, that was all; but had he caught me off my guard, I doubt if you could have made him loose his grip on my throat.

"We are good friends now, ain't we, Holdfast?" and the hound wagged his tail as if in assent.

The woman was surprised, for the man had broken down one barrier at least that surrounded her.

Could he do the same with her other pets, she wondered?

She dared not put them to the test, for she could see that the cats, parrot and raven were uneasy at the subjection of the bloodhound.

They actually showed fear of the man, where never before had she seen them exhibit an atom of dread.

As though regarding his triumph over the dog as of small moment, Kent asked lightly:

"So you say that I am going upon a voyage, Lady of Mystery?"

"Yes."

"Can you tell me where and when?"

"Yes. You sail very soon, but not far away—that is, not to far-off seas."

"You do read one's mind well, Wo-ton-ka: but can you tell the nature of my voyage?"

"You rove alone for one thing."

"What is that?"

"Gold."

"Will I get it?"

"Yes, but—"

"But what?"

"It will be blood-stained."

"Ah! you know this, do you?"

"Are you not a man of crime?"

"Very true! I have been good so long, I had really forgotten that."

"What? Can you, whose conscience has been filled with despairing cries, whose right hand has taken scores of human lives, forget your past, Buccaneer Kent?" slowly demanded the woman.

"Had I taken life under the flag of my country, had the despairing cries been from the enemies of my people crying for mercy, then the world would have said that I was a great hero, because I was a great slayer of men; but, because I fought for gold instead of patriotism, because I fought under a flag of my own, killing from a personal grudge, not a national one, you say my conscience should haunt me. There we differ, Lady of Mystery, for I have my own aims, my own fortune to carve out the same as a nation has, and why should the act of the individual be heinous, while that of the country is just?"

The buccaneer had spoken warmly, arguing from his own standpoint of right and wrong, and the woman had listened with strange interest.

The man seemed to impress her strangely, and with a sigh she said:

"You are a remarkable man, Captain Kent; and your reasoning has the merit of being your honest belief at least."

"But you would have me rescue you?"

"Yes."

"What would you have me do?"

"To protect me from evil, to give me good fortune."

"Upon one condition only."

"Name it."

"That you will kill only in self-defense, not wantonly."

"I accept the condition, Lady of Mystery."

"Then wear this amulet; but, twice each year seek me to have its potency renewed."

"Kneel, Buccaneer Kent, and bend your head low, clasping in your hands the skeleton hands on this chair of fate!" commanded Wo-ton-ka the Witch.

The pirate obeyed, bending his head until it rested almost upon her knees as she sat in the weird chair.

Taking from a pocket a gold chain to which was attached an anchor, she clasped it around the neck of the buccaneer with these words:

"Wear this anchor amulet, Kent Curtis, to guard you from harm afloat and ashore, as long as you keep your pledge to slay not wantonly your fellow-man. "Do yo so give pledge?"

"I do."

"Arise and gaze up yonder," and she pointed to the flagstaff, while she arose and entered her cabin.

Down came the flag that was waving there, and up in its place went an anchor of gold in a red field.

Quickly it was lowered, and up went a green flag in which were a score of writhing snakes.

This flag came down on a run and the next to float out in the breeze was a black field with a red gallows in the center from which a human form was hanging.

This, too, was lowered, to give place to a flag with a golden field in the center of which, to his amazement, the sea brigand beheld the *fac-simile* of the figurehead on his new vessel—an Evil Spirit!

This flag was left floating and Wo-ton-ka reappeared.

"You have seen;—go your way, Kent Curtis."

"But, let me pay—"

"Go!" she commanded sternly.

The man of crime obeyed, glancing back as long as the cabin was in sight to still see his Evil Spirit flag floating above the home of the witch.

CHAPTER XXXV.

DESPAIR AND HOPE.

BACK to the home of Claude Cassiday, I ask my reader to accompany, to that pretty cottage home at the time the news came of the daring act of the young sailor invading as a spy the land of the Algerines and discovering the place where the American prisoners were held as slaves.

The news of the daring night expedition led by Claude Cassiday had followed close on this, and two happy hearts were there in the little cottage, for the son and brother was rapidly ascending fame's difficult ladder by his own nerve and skill.

If he had gone off on a cruise under a cloud, from his fatal duel on his former voyage, certainly his gallant deeds were the silver lining to the clouds, and must soon drive all gloom away.

Then came the news of the decorations presented by three foreign monarchs, and the promotion given Claude by his own Government in recognition of his brilliant and valuable services, and Mrs. Cassiday began to realize that where she had been the wife of a hero she was also the mother of one, while Helen came to regard her brother as an idol to almost worship.

Mrs. Cassiday received letters often from her son.

He never neglected writing home, either to his mother or sister, when opportunity offered, and never a word did he say of having foes aboard ship who gloried in persecuting him.

The letters now and then contained remittances, but the money was put aside for Claude in the bank, for Mrs. Cassiday owned her home and had a very comfortable income from her interest in several merchant vessels.

But suddenly came a letter falling like a thunderbolt from a clear sky, for it was a forewarning of trouble to come.

It was followed a few weeks after by the fateful letter which the reader has seen Claude Cassiday write in his room in the hotel, the night he left his ship a disgraced and exiled officer.

With a heart full of bitterness the mother read the letter aloud to Helen and the two wept together.

It was for the loved hero they felt more than for themselves.

They knew that he was innocent, and they at once felt that he had been drugged and entrapped, as he had hinted in his first letter.

But they felt that he had no proof of this, no proof of a conspiracy, and had suffered the worst punishment that could have befallen him.

"Claude would rather have suffered death than be dismissed, I know; but he will pay every dollar he owes to that poor woman, and one such as he is can readily get a position in the merchant service and rise in his profession."

"But oh! how unjust, how cruel to him this fearful sentence," said Mrs. Cassiday, after she and Helen had come to talk over the affair calmly together.

"As for ourselves there is no need for Claude to send us a cent, and he already has several hundred in bank, which he knows not of, that I did not use, but saved for him, and this will be at his service, while I can give him enough more of our savings, Helen, to liquidate wholly, I think, this debt which has been his ruin."

"We have our home and an income coming in, so all we will be out is what we have saved, so it is not so bad after all, is it, Helen?"

"No indeed, mother, and brother Claude will work his way home and soon get a ship I am sure," was the cheery response of the beautiful girl.

And so the mother and daughter planned; but Fate serves us shabby tricks sometimes, and just when we expect good treatment at his hands, and Mrs. Cassiday was no exception to the rule.

Before another letter came from Claude word was received from Mrs. Cassiday's agent that one of the vessels in which she held a sixth interest had gone down at sea, and the insurance had run out but a few days before and had not been renewed as she was expected into port daily.

It cut the income of the mother and daughter down one-third; but they bravely bore up under the loss and were not cast down.

Months after came a letter from a South American port.

It was from Claude and told how he had gone out to Rio Janeiro before the mast in an English brig, and had sent every dollar of his wages by the same mail to the widow of the merchant captain whose money he had been accused of taking.

He also stated that the brig was unseaworthy and would be condemned by her owners, so that he would be out of a berth, but hoped soon to step into a better place, yet could give no address at which to write to him.

After several weeks another letter came saying that he was in the mountains acting as an overseer on a plantation.

But a third letter stated that his employer had died and he was out of work once more.

Then came more service before the mast, until at last a cheery letter was received giving the news of his having been appointed first mate of a brig trading between South American, West Indian and Mexican ports.

He gave an order here for letters to be sent to him at Vera Cruz, and happy was he made by news from home.

But the cheerful letters were written with aching hearts, for another vessel in which Mrs. Cassidy held interest had been burned at sea and a third was so old and leaky that she was sold for what she would bring and pitiful was the sum the widow received.

Thus the mother and sister of Claude Cassidy were left without an income.

But not a word of this went to the lone wanderer to add to his wretchedness.

The two bore their sorrows and misfortunes in silence, hoping that in the end all would come well, and only anxious that that terrible debt, which had become a nightmare to them, would be liquidated and Claude thus be able to come home to them and save the cottage home over their heads.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

WITH her income swept from her Mrs. Cassidy was compelled to fall back upon the little she had saved up.

She would not write one line to her son of their troubles at home, nor would Helen.

They knew that he had his own troubles and misfortunes, and that every dollar he earned he was saving up to pay that appalling debt.

They knew that he was at least contented in the belief that they were beyond want, and this thought he should still have to cheer him.

What the amount of the Varney debt was they did not know, but felt sure that it was far larger than they had supposed it to be.

When her own savings were gone Mrs. Cassidy had seen a mortgage upon her house staring her in the face, for having deposited the money her son sent them in his own name they could not touch it.

In vain did they try to get work to support them, and write to Claude of their troubles they would not.

The iron had entered deep into their souls, for the evil news came of Claude's downfall and those who had been anxious to know them, now knew them no more.

Then too it was recalled that Mrs. Cassidy's father had failed in business, many asserted under very suspicious circumstances, while Mrs. Cassidy herself, as Helen Marcy, had been engaged to Kent Curtis who had turned pirate.

In fact, many things were trumped up against the Cassidays without a foundation of truth, and all went through "busybodies" to the ears of the poor woman and her daughter.

At last the time could no longer be put off and a mortgage had to be given on the home they loved so well.

The one to whom Mrs. Cassidy went was Moses Gripstein, and the mortgage was made out for half its value, as the place stood, furniture and all, with the highest interest the money-lender could collect.

With this money the mother and daughter packed up a few belongings and went away from the city, going to New York where they hoped to find work of some kind, to at least support them and pay Moses Gripstein's heavy interest.

So the little home was tightly closed up, a lock and chain was put upon the gate and the weeds sprung up unmolested in the walks and flower-beds.

Months passed away, and one afternoon a barque sailed into Boston Bay.

She had been on a long voyage, hailing from Boston, and had lost two of her officers in a South American port and some of her men.

The place of second mate was filled in Vera Cruz by a young sailor who had just resigned from a brig and was about to start home to the United States.

It was Claude Cassidy, and he had not been two days at sea before the captain and the crew recognized in him the perfect sailor.

Crossing the Gulf a fearful tornado struck the barque, washing the first mate overboard and breaking the captain's leg by dashing him against the mizenmast.

"I am useless, Mate Cassidy, so take com-

mand of the barque, though I fear all is lost," cried the captain, disheartened by his injury.

"No indeed, sir, I have weathered worse gales in a far worse craft, so have no anxiety on that account."

"I'll come down and set your leg, sir, when I can leave the deck."

The cheery reply of the young mate helped the captain amazingly, and instead of being borne to the cabin he had himself lashed on deck in a chair.

From there he watched his young officer, saw him change the sail on the vessel, and put her away before the hurricane.

All through the night the storm lasted and when dawn came and the clouds swept away the captain grasped Claude's hand and said warmly:

"My young friend, you have saved this ship and you alone."

"Where did you learn seamanship?"

"In a hard school, sir," was the answer, and then he had the captain borne into the cabin and skillfully set his leg, for he had had much experience in his life with wounds and injuries.

From the Gulf into Boston Harbor, Claude Cassidy acted as captain of the barque, and a better commander all admitted they had never known.

And as the barque glided up the beautiful bay, Claude Cassidy stood near the helmsman acting as pilot, while the captain sat in a chair near him, for his leg was healing rapidly.

"You know Boston Bay well, then, Mr. Cassidy?" said the captain.

"Yes, sir."

"Then you have often been here before?"

"Yes, sir; Boston is my birthplace; but I have been some years away from home."

"Folks live here, I guess?" continued the skipper, with real Yankee inquisitiveness.

"I have a mother and sister living here, sir."

"They'll be more than glad to see you, I guess."

"But my home is in Maine, though I command this Boston barque, and I've been gone on a long cruise, for we went to England, then China, and next to Lima, and round the Horn homeward, as you may have seen by the ship's log."

"Yes, sir," and Claude was hardly attentive to his captain's words, for his thoughts went back to the long ago when he had sailed away from Boston an officer on a man-of-war, and now he was returning under different circumstances.

"Well, Mr. Cassidy, the owners owe you a debt of gratitude, and should pay you liberally, for you saved their barque for them," continued the captain.

"I only did my duty, sir."

"There was a man of your name who won a lieutenancy in the navy, years ago, for saving a vessel-of-war, and was killed in Mexico, I heard. Are you kin to him?"

"It was my father, sir."

"But, I recollect that his son got into the navy, too."

"Yes, sir."

"Your brother, maybe?"

"No, sir; it was myself."

"I want to know; but what on earth did you leave it for?"

"I was dismissed from the navy, sir," was the response of Claude Cassidy, that fairly startled the Yankee captain.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE DEBT PAID.

THE captain of the barque fairly paled at the unexpected, earnest response to his question which Claude Cassidy made.

He dared ask no more, but he was sure that the cause of dismissal was for some trifling neglect of naval etiquette, and after a moment he said, ignoring wholly what Claude had said:

"Well, Master Cassidy, as I am liable to be a cripple for a month or more yet, I shall ask permission to run up home, leaving you in charge of the barque, while I will want you for my first mate when we sail again, so it will give you steady work for a long time, and good pay."

"You are very kind to me, sir, and I appreciate it," responded Claude, and he turned to his duties, for the barque was nearing an anchorage.

The upper sails were taken in, and as the barque luffed sharp, the anchor was let fall.

Claude did not neglect his work, in his anxiety to see his mother and sister, and it was not until he had reported to the owners for his captain the arrival of the barque, that he made his way homeward.

The years that had passed, and his long stay in Southern climes, had changed him greatly, his face being burned to the hue of a Spaniard.

His form had developed into splendid manhood, for he possessed a perfect physique, was straight as an Indian, with broad shoulders, and the look of one of wonderful agility.

His beard had grown out and his hair fell in waving masses upon his shoulders, and, added to his neat sailor suit, he presented a striking appearance.

He walked along rapidly, carrying a carpet-bag containing his slender wardrobe and a few presents for his mother and sister.

But it was not toward his own home that he wended his steps, but, after some inquiry, to another part of the city.

He halted before a pleasant-looking house, on the porch of which sat a lady of middle age engaged in sewing.

She looked up with surprise at seeing the young sailor enter, carpet-bag in hand, and rose as he came and doffed his hat.

"Pardon me, madam, but does Mrs. Horace Varney dwell here?"

"I am Mrs. Varney, sir."

His face flushed, but he set down his carpet-bag and drew from his jacket a leather wallet, while he said:

"Permit me to introduce myself, Mrs. Varney, as Claude Cassidy."

"What! the young officer who has corresponded with me for so long?"

"I am indeed glad to see you Mr. Cassidy?"

"Mrs. Varney, I am here to pay you the balance of the money due you, of the amount intrusted to my hands by your husband, Captain Varney."

"My dear young man, let me tell you that did I not have need of the money, not a dollar of it would I take from you."

"I know all about that unfortunate affair in which you were so badly treated, for from my heart I believe that you are as innocent of the charges against you as I am myself."

"A man who is as brave as you are cannot be wrong, and you have proven you were maligned by sending me from time to time every dollar that you could spare."

"I am glad, Mrs. Varney, to feel that you believe me guiltless, for I know of no others that do, with the exception of a few brother officers, so strong was the evidence against me."

"After taking a glass of wine ashore I lost all sense of personal responsibility it seems, and when I paid out from my own money saved the debts I had made myself liable for unconsciously, Captain Nevitte sent me to get the money left with me and which you sent for."

"It was gone, and the amounts of my debts and the money remaining in my possession, by a remarkable coincidence, tallied with it, and so I stood accused."

"I am sorry I wrote for the money, but then I was urged to do so by letters received telling me that you were a wild, dissipated fellow and would yet get into some scrape where you would use my money hoping to pay me back."

"So I wrote to the captain asking him to send it to me."

Claude Cassidy had turned deadly pale at this, and Mrs. Varney started at his sudden question uttered in a hoarse voice.

"Mrs. Varney, have you the letters written you from the vessel?"

"I have."

"Will you give them to me, my dear madam, and a receipt in full for the money left with me, with interest in full from date, for here is the balance due and the interest?"

He handed out a roll of bank-notes as he spoke, and with them a sheet of paper upon which were a number of figures.

"Please see if that is not correct."

"Pardon me for not asking you in before, Mr. Cassidy, for I was so surprised at seeing you."

"Pray, come in now."

She led the way into her little sitting-room, and glanced over the figures.

"I do not intend to take interest from you, Mr. Cassidy."

"You must, madam," was the stern response of the young sailor, in a tone that startled Mrs. Varney.

"You must take every cent of interest, for it is your due, and I have figured it down to the correct amount."

"But, Mr. Cassidy, I fear it may not be convenient for you to pay me all now, so take some back and bring it to me when convenient."

"I thank you, Mrs. Varney, but this debt has been with me in my waking and sleeping hours until it has seemed a load too heavy for me to carry at times."

"I pay it to you with a pleasure unbounded, and I only ask your receipt in full, interest included, and the letters to which you referred, to make me a very happy man."

"You shall have them, sir, and every word that I can say in your favor."

"But will you not have supper with me and my little family?"

"I thank you, no; for I must go home, as I have been away for a long time."

"But I am a new man now."

Tears came into the eyes of the good woman, as she fervently said:

"God bless you, Mr. Cassidy."

Then she went to an upper room and secured the letters she had referred to, and wrote the receipt for the money in full.

Placing both in the hands of the young sailor, she said:

"I hope this cloud may pass away from your life, Mr. Cassidy. But you are anxious to go,

and I will say good-by, only promise to come and see me.

"You will do this will you not?"

"I will, madam, and then I can tell you of your husband of whom I know you wish to hear all that I can tell.

"You have helped me, Mrs. Varney, immensely in these letters and the receipt," and taking up his carpet-bag Claude left the house and wended his way toward the other side of the town where was the home of his mother, and as he walked along his heart knew the first joy it had known for years.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE BLOW FALLS.

THE twilight was near at hand when Claude Cassiday arrived near his home.

He walked rapidly along, holding his head down, fearing that he might be seen by his mother and sister and recognized, and he wished to give them a complete surprise, knowing that they had not expected him home for some time, as he was making a fair salary and wished to earn every dollar of the Varney debt before his return.

But when the brig had been laid off, Claude had been paid extra money by the owners for his valuable services, and getting the chance to go on the barque as mate, he at once decided upon the return home, as he had the full amount for Mrs. Varney.

The pay he had earned on the barque was not to be given him until the next day, but he had something over the Varney debt, so did not mind the delay, especially as he looked upon it as an assured thing that he would be first mate on the vessel.

So it was that Claude Cassiday was at last able to come home, for he had vowed never to do so until Mrs. Varney was paid.

Stopping at the little gate he uttered a cry, as he beheld the chain, and noted the closed blinds and weed-grown yard.

His face turned white, for what had happened at home?

Those were the days when mails went by sailing vessels, telegraphs were unknown, and he had had no letter from home of more recent date than six months before.

He could not understand it.

Not a soul was in sight to tell him what it meant, and he stood like one in a dream for some minutes.

Then he remembered that at the cabin on the cliff lived an old couple who often did chores for his mother.

So thither he wended his steps, and to his surprise he beheld a flag flying over the cabin and that all about it had been improved.

"Have they too gone?" he murmured as he advanced toward the little home.

The sun had just sunk behind the western horizon, but the glow fell full upon his face and revealed it distinctly to the person seated upon the piazza.

It was Wo-ton-ka, the Witch of the Cliff, and about her were her pets.

She had seen him stop at his home and then come on toward her cabin.

She saw him glance curiously at the place, its improvements and surroundings, and then at her.

But, he did not halt, and raised his cap with marked respect as he halted before her and said:

"Pardon me, madam, but I knew an old couple who once lived here."

"Yes, they have passed away—poor old Jerry the fisherman and his wife—they were murdered one night for the little money they had laid by."

"I regret exceedingly to hear this, madam, for they were good, harmless old people; but I would ask of you what I came to ask of them, why the Cassiday cottage is closed?"

"Your mother and sister have left Boston some time ago," she said in a kindly tone.

"Left Boston?"

"Yes."

"But why, may I ask?"

"Will you sit down and let me tell you all about them, or do you fear to be the guest of a witch?"

"I am glad to accept your hospitality, madam, for awhile; but may I ask how it is that you recognize me?"

"Did I not say that I was a witch?" she said, archly.

"I do not believe in witches, madam, nor am I in the least superstitious."

"You are wise, Master Claude Cassiday, wise beyond your years; but they call me the Woman of Mystery and the Witch of the Cliff, but I claim simply the name Wo-ton-ka."

"An Indian name?"

"Yes; but let me tell you about your mother and sister, who were my friends."

She brought an easy-chair for him from the cabin and resumed her place in her own favorite chair of human bones.

Then she said:

"It has been a long time since you heard from your mother, I take it, if you expected to find her here."

"It has been half a year, madam."

"Ah! so you have not received her last letter telling you that they were to go to New York."

"No, madam; but why have they left home?"

"It is a story of misfortunes, sir, that never come singly, for your mother's interest in vessels faded away, one being lost at sea, another wrecked, and a third laid up as unseaworthy."

"So it was that within a year her income faded away."

"But she wrote me nothing of all this," said Claude, with surprise.

"No, for she thought you had troubles enough."

"And she has lost all?"

"She had saved up some money, but, of course, had to draw on that, and at last it came to a mortgage on her home for actual necessities."

"My poor mother."

"This she obtained, and unable to get work she went to New York, but I fear she has met with little success there as she was unable to pay the interest upon the mortgage."

"My God! and she has lost her home?"

"No, for the alternative is to lose it or pay the mortgage will be to-morrow."

"And it is lost, for I have but a few dollars, I may say, and the amount due is large."

"Twelve hundred I believe, sir."

"Then it must go, yes, our home must go," and, for a moment, Claude Cassiday came nearer yielding to despair than ever in his life before.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

A LOOK of pity flashed over the dark, weirdly beautiful face of the woman as she gazed upon the bowed head of the youth.

She knew his story well, for, as she had said, Mrs. Cassiday and Helen had been most friendly toward her.

She had seen Helen one day, soon after she came to him in the cliff cabin, strolling along the cliff, and her hat had blown off and fallen upon the beach below.

Instantly she had sent her hound after it, and he laid it at Helen's feet.

Thus had an intimacy sprung up between the witch and the young girl, and Helen had urged her mother to call, which she did.

To Mrs. Cassiday's amazement the strange woman knew all about her affairs and offered her money, which however she refused, but it made her feel more friendly than ever to her.

"You have been unfortunate then, sir?" she asked, as though to draw Claude out.

"Yes, and no."

"I think that is a paradoxical response," she said with a smile.

"Let me explain that years ago I made a vow not to return to my home until I could accomplish a certain purpose."

"I accomplished it, so returned to-day, and in this I have been fortunate."

"Then I have come back almost without money, or with a hundred at best, when I get my pay to-morrow, and in that I am unfortunate, for I cannot aid my mother."

"But you are fortunate in having paid every dollar of the debt you deemed that you owed?"

"I believe you are a—witch."

"I told you I was, and I'll prove it."

"You came back with the money to pay the balance of that merchant captain's legacy left with you for his wife, and which money lost you your commission in the navy."

"By heaven! but you do read the past well," said Claude excitedly.

"Perhaps I can read the future as well."

"It may be, but I doubt it."

"I have surprised many with my powers."

"Then surprise me by telling me what is before me?"

"No, I will not attempt to unfold the mysteries of your future; but I believe that in the end your wrongs will be made as clear as the noon-day."

"Heaven grant it, for I live with that hope; but then you do believe that I have suffered wrongs?"

"I know it."

"God bless you for those words, my dear lady; but I will not detain you more now, for it is getting dark, and I must return to the town and—yes, I'll return aboard ship, for I am happy to say I have a good berth and will keep it."

"I am glad of that; but let me tell you how to find your mother and sister."

"You know then?"

"Yes, write down the address as I give it to you."

Claude wrote the address down with the quill and inkhorn handed to him by Wo-ton-ka, and then asked:

"Will you tell me who holds this mortgage?"

"It will do no good for you to see him; but if you will come here to-morrow evening at this time I will tell you."

"I will be here, and I guess I will know my fate then as to my position."

"If I remain with the barque she must go in repairs and I'll have a chance to run to New York to see my mother and sister, whom I will write to to-night."

"If I do not get the berth I'll have, indeed, ample time," and Claude smiled sadly.

"To whom does your vessel belong?"

"Thomas & Reed, shipping merchants."

"And the vessel's name?"

"The North Star."

"Thank you."

"I have, indeed, to thank you most warmly for your kindness to me, for you are a friend in need."

"Though a witch."

"I told you that I did not believe in witches, though I confess you are wonderful woman."

"And you are not superstitious?"

"Not in the least, madam."

"Yet you are a sailor."

"I do not recall the time when I was not a sailor, for I went to sea with my father from my earliest years."

"And you were a prisoner of Kent the Buccaneer once?"

"You know this?"

"Yes, and also that you were called his Boy Lieutenant."

"Yes, that is true: but I was young then and forced to be a pirate; but I learned much that was of service to me."

"Dauntless; but how did Kent treat you?"

"Nobly, I must say."

"He was as kind as any father could have been to me."

"And a pirate boy officer, you yet came home?"

"I was not a sea thief you know and did not serve for gold."

"Yes, I am poor, and yet I have had fortunes pass through my hands, for I was the keeper of Captain Kent's treasures."

"You knew that he was dead?"

"Yes, I saw his vessel go to pieces."

"And he does not haunt you?"

"I do not believe in ghosts, you know."

"You are a brave man, Master Claude."

"May I offer you a glass of wine?"

"Thank you, no, for I never touch wines or liquors—a glass of wine was my ruin, and yet I never drank except in the greatest moderation—now I would not touch it for a fortune."

"Stick to that resolution then," was the earnest response of the woman, and bidding her good-night, Claude took up his carpet-bag and departed.

Hardly had he gone when the witch went into the cabin, wrote a few lines, folded the paper and sealing it, threw on a long cloak that concealed her form and walked rapidly away, her hound trotting at her heels, her other pets "keeping house."

She left the door open, but no one would have dared venture there, she knew.

CHAPTER XL.

MOSES GRIPSTEIN MAKES A CALL.

A KNOCK at the shop door, just as he was closing for the night, somewhat startled Emanuel Gripstein, who hesitated an instant whether to allow the late comer to enter or not!

But a second knock delivered in a "hurry-up-and-open-this-door," style, caused him to obey the summons.

He saw out in the darkness a cloaked form attended by a large dog.

"Give this to Mr. Moses Gripstein, please, and see that he does not fail to come."

A letter was slipped into the hand of the young Hebrew, and before he could reply the woman had disappeared.

So he reclosed the door and soon after went up to his uncle's sitting-room with his basket of cash, sales and loans, for Emanuel was the cashier of the shop, having been lately promoted to that office.

Moses Gripstein heard how Emanuel had received the letter, and breaking the seal, read:

"RIDGE CLIFF,

Thursday.

"Moses Gripstein, the money-lender, will receive a handsome sum of money by coming to-night upon receipt of this letter, to the home of

"WO-TON-KA, THE WITCH."

Mr. Gripstein smiled in a gratified way at the thought of receiving the money, and then he looked a little serious at the thought of visiting the one whose name was signed to the letter.

He was superstitious, and he was very much afraid of the witch, of whom he had often heard, but never seen.

He knew the cabin's situation well, and it was not so very far from where he considered that he owned property.

"Was it very dark, Emanuel?" he asked.

"It is moonlight, uncle."

"Moonlight and riches," he muttered.

The idea of not obeying the summons never for a moment suggested itself.

The request of a witch was the same as a command with him.

"Emanuel?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Tell Jacob I want the carriage ready."

"What, going out to-night, uncle?" asked the surprised Emanuel.

"I was."

"I will give the order," and the nephew walked off in thorough amazement, for Moses

Gripstein had not been out of the house after nightfall for years.

Jacob soon came to the door with the lumbering old vehicle in which Mr. Gripstein was wont to take his regular afternoon outing.

Mr. Gripstein took a glass of Schiedam Schnapps to keep out the cold, and wrapped up as though he was going to the North Pole.

Jacob had orders to drive to the Cassidy cottage, and there he was told to wait, while his master, after going in one direction to fool his driver, turned and walked toward the cabin on the cliff.

A large red lantern hung over the door, and a flag was floating from the staff.

Moses Gripstein approached with some hesitancy and much dread.

But suddenly the door opened, and the witch stood before him.

The dog was in front of her, a cat on either side, and the parrot and raven perched upon her shoulder.

Had he had the strength, Moses Gripstein would have fled in terror.

But he stood still, while Wo-ton-ka said:

"Fear nothing, Moses Gripstein the money-lender, but come in."

He obeyed with fear and trembling, while he asked:

"Does t'e dogs bite me?"

"No."

"Vell, dem cats scratch, don't it?"

"All of my pets are docile, sir, unless aroused."

"Vell, I don't vas arouse dem, mees," and Moses entered the house.

The door closed with a bang, and as the woman motioned him to a seat, she threw herself into her own arm-chair.

Then Moses felt as though he had left hope behind.

He gazed eagerly about the room, and silently cursed himself for being such a fool as to come there.

The room was draped in blue, had a black ceiling overhead in which were silver stars, and an altar, several chairs and a table, all of somber hue, were the only furniture in the room.

The Jew knew not what to say, so waited for the woman to speak.

At last she did so, by asking:

"Did you come prepared for business, Mr. Gripstein?"

"I vas always ready for pizziness, mees."

"I esteem it an honor to have a visit from you, Mr. Gripstein."

"I vas very proud," and Moses put his hand upon his heart and bowed low.

"It was the hope of the money that brought you."

Moses looked uneasy.

"You expect to get a nice sum of money?"

"Vell, t'e letters say so."

"I meant just what I wrote, but there are conditions."

"Vell?" and Mr. Gripstein became more and more uneasy, and began to wish that Jacob was within hailing distance.

"You have a mortgage upon the cottage and grounds of Mrs. Claude Cassidy?"

"Vell, I haf."

"It amounts, with interest, to just twelve hundred dollars."

"You vas know dat?"

"Yes, as I know that you loaned just one fourth the value of the place, with its improvements, furniture, and all."

"It vas a goot mortgage."

"Yes, with property ten per cent more valuable now than when you got the mortgages."

"Land vas rising in value, mees."

"When will the mortgage end?"

"Vell I don't haf my books vit me."

"No, but you know?"

"Vell, I send you vord some day."

"No, I know, as you do, that you would close the mortgage to-morrow at noon, and thus get a very handsome sum out of your transactions."

"But here is the money, with interest, and you are to give me a receipt in full for it, and cancel the mortgage the first thing in the morning."

"But, my tear; I vas—"

"See here, Moses Gripstein, do you intend to attempt any trickery with me?"

"You forget where you are, and you forget my power."

"You forget! you forget!" fairly shrieked the parrot, while the raven croaked dismally, the two cats humped their backs, bristled up like porcupines and whined, the large dog joining in with a deep, long-drawn out howl.

Moses Gripstein trembled violently and tried to rise; but the woman said sternly:

"Write a receipt, sir, canceling the mortgage!"

She placed ink, paper and a quill pen on the table, and by it the money.

He obeyed, but with a trembling hand.

Soon the canceled mortgage in the morning, Mr. Gripstein."

"Yes, yes."

"Good-night, sir."

"Goot-night," Vitcher Vomans," and as the door opened Moses Gripstein shot out of it, at a more rapid pace than he had know for years.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE KIDNAPPERS.

CLAUDE CASSIDAY returned by his boyhood home with a heavy heart, after leaving Wo-ton-ka the Witch.

He halted at the gate and leaning upon it gave way to the most painful meditation.

The moon had risen at sunset and cast its silvery light upon the scene, but it held no attraction in its beauty for him.

He leaped over the fence even forgetting his carpet-bag, and making his way to the piazza sat down there to think.

The harbor was calm, resting under the silvery rays of the moon, and the lights from the many vessels in the harbor twinkled like a myriad of stars.

The sounds from the city came to the ears of the returned sea rover, but he seemed to hear nothing, see nothing but to feel everything.

All his life was reviewed as he sat there, and a vehicle driving near failed to attract more than a passing glance.

It halted at the corner of the grounds, a cloaked form got out and walked away, but still the vehicle remained.

The cloaked form came back at a hasty walk, entered the carriage and it rolled away.

But still Claude Cassidy remained upon the little piazza.

How long he remained there he did not know, for the moon had risen high in the heavens.

Then he arose to go and had reached the gate when he heard voices.

Not wishing to be seen there, at his old home, as he might be suspected of evil, he crouched down in the shrubbery and beheld two men approaching.

They halted near him and he heard their every word.

"Nick has not come yet," said one.

"No, but he'll be along, never fear."

"He knows the place?"

"Oh yes, I told him to meet us right here."

"Whose place is this?"

"It belonged to a naval officer but he got dismissed for stealing and his folks have gone away."

"It's deserted now, but I know there is good booty inside and we'll strike it some night and see what it amounts to."

"Why not to-night, if nobody is here?"

"Cause we has all on our hands for to-night that we can handle in kidnapping the girl and picking up the valuables that are in her home."

"You are sure there is plenty of stuff?"

"Yes, indeed, for I hired there once as a servant and there's money and jewelry in plenty to pick up besides getting the girl."

"She's rich?"

"Now she is, or her father the commodore is, and he'll pay big ransom for her you can swear."

"You are sure he's not at home?"

"No, he's crasing with his fleet."

"And the servants?"

"There's only the girl, her governess, the old butler, cook, maid and coachman on the place, and all but two of 'em have gone to a ball to-night."

"I like to be sure."

"Yes, it's best, but here comes Nick, and he's on time, for he said midnight would find him here."

A form was seen approaching, and soon a third man came up.

"On hand, mates, I see."

"Yes, and ready for the swag," answered one.

"Well, I don't like the moonlight, but it can't be helped."

"No, and it is a close cut to the shore where our boat is."

"Yes, and we can be out of the bay before dawn with the girl aboard."

"Well, Nick, it will be a good night's work for us, as the commodore will pay big ransom."

"Suppose he don't?"

"Then I'll carry out the threat, I shall make to him."

"What is that?"

"To knife the girl."

"I hates shedding a woman's blood."

"Bah! blood is blood with me be it woman or brute," was the savage reply, and the fellow added:

"Come on!"

The other two followed him in silence, none of them observing the carpet-bag which Claude had forgotten about.

Leaping over the fence lightly, as they were receding from sight his foot struck it and he picked it up.

"Ah! this is luck, for my pistols are in here," he said and opening the carpet-bag he buckled on his belt containing his pistols and knife.

Then, keeping in the shadow of the trees that bordered the road he walked on after the men, keeping them in sight.

He saw them halt at a grand gateway, then entered.

"It is, as I supposed, the house of Commodore Hartwell they are to rob, his young daughter they are to kidnap."

"Well, I'll see if I can spoil their little game."

He also entered the grounds, hiding his carpet-bag in the shadow of the gateway.

Creeping among the trees he got near the mansion to see the men on the piazza picking the lock.

A light burned in the hall, and after a few minutes' delay the three men entered.

The door was closed, but not tightly, and Claude Cassidy entered a moment after them.

He saw lights flashing upon the upper floor, then heard a startled cry, which was instantly smothered, followed by a blow and a fall.

"I'll hold the girl, mates, so get what swag you can here and then we'll take the lower floor in," said Nick.

His comrades obeyed, one remarking:

"I hope you didn't knife ther governess?"

No, I just gave her a stunner that quieted her, and threw a towel with a silencing drug over her face.

"But hurry up!"

In a minute or two more the three were descending the broad stairway, two of them holding dark lanterns.

"Lay to, there, and haul down your colors!" The stern command startled the men and instantly the lanterns were extinguished.

But there was a lamp in the hall, and one of the men fired as though to put it out.

Suddenly two shots followed and quick as a flash a form sprung upon Nick, dealing him a terrible blow that felled him.

As for his companions they fell at the flashes of the pistols aimed by Claude Cassidy.

The sailor grasped the young girl as Nick fell, and she cried:

"Thank God there is help at hand!"

"Yes, run up and take the towel off the face of your governess, as it is saturated with a drug to render her unconscious."

The gamey girl uttered a cry of alarm and bounded back up the stairs.

But she returned, accompanied by her governess, who was ill and suffering.

"I have bound this fellow, Miss Hartwell, so that he cannot escape."

"I overheard their plot to rob the house and kidnap you, for their boat lies near, so I followed them in."

"Oh! what do I not owe to you, sir?" and Celeste Hartwell grasped the hand of the young sailor and gazed fixedly into his face.

"Nothing: but I will send an officer here to your aid."

"And those men?"

"Are dead," was the quiet response.

"And will you leave us?"

"Let me get an officer, Miss Hartwell, for I have no authority, and I hear your servants coming," and Claude Cassidy walked quickly to the door and disappeared.

Fifteen minutes after a constable arrived, but he could tell nothing about Claude Cassidy more than that a young sailor, bearing a carpet-bag had bid him hasten to Commodore Hartwell's mansion where he was needed.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A RECORD REVIVED.

THE constable found the prisoner at the Hartwell mansion securely bound, and, as Claude Cassidy had said, his pals were dead.

"That man was a dead shot," he said, as he pointed out the fact that both men were shot in the very center of the forehead.

"Where were they, miss?" he asked of Celeste.

"Coming down the stairs, behind that man, who had hold of me."

"The young man stood here in the hall, and the two men who were killed each had a dark lantern."

"My governess and myself were seated in my sitting-room engaged in finishing some work to be sold at the church fair, when the men entered."

"I gave up all for lost, when they felled my governess to the floor and handled me so roughly; but I saw the young man standing in the hall before they did, but supposed he was one of the robbers."

"He had a pistol in each hand, and fired one after the other as quick as a flash, when he rushed upon the man who held me."

"Why did he not return with you, officer?"

"He said he would go on to the jail and notify the sheriff of the trouble here, miss."

But though aid came in the person of several officers, the sailor did not return, and no one knew who he was.

He had, however, told the officers that he overheard the plot, that the men had a vessel off-shore, and he had followed them into the mansion.

When they got to the mansion they supposed he had gone on with another officer, but he was not to be found.

The young sailor, however, had purposely absented himself from the officers.

He had no desire to attract attention to himself, to appear as a hero again.

So he had hastened on to an obscure tavern, secured a room and retired.

But it was long before he got to sleep so filled was his head with the experiences of the day and night, and his return home.

It was late when he awoke, and he went down to breakfast.

As he had expected to remain at home all night he knew he would not be missed aboard ship.

While waiting for his breakfast the servant read him the morning paper, for at that time the City of Boston boasted of but one daily, and there were no "telegraph dispatches" in it, it is useless to add.

The first thing that his eyes fell upon was the following heading:

"AN EX-BUCCANEER!"

"THE RETURN OF A NOTED PERSONAGE."

"CLAUDE CASSIDAY AGAIN IN PORT."

"The fine barque North Star, Enoch Paul, master, and Thomas & Reed, owners came into port last evening under command of her third mate, acting captain."

"The North Star has been on a long cruise in foreign seas, touching at ports in China, India, the Mediterranean, and England and France, after which she sailed for Peru, at last heading homeward *via* Mexico and the West Indies."

"At Vera Cruz, having lost two of her officers by fever, she shipped as mate no less a personage than Claude Cassiday, an ex-boy pirate, whose pluck got for him a position as midshipman in the United States Navy."

"It will be remembered that Claude Cassiday's father was also promoted to the navy from the merchant marine for services rendered the Government, and lost his life in Mexico, leaving a wife and two children, a son and daughter."

"Mrs. Cassiday was Miss Helen Marcy of our town and a great beauty in her day, who was at one time engaged to be married to Kent Curtis who went to the bad after being discarded by her, and turned sea rover, developed into Kent the Buccaneer of the Red Wings, and losing his life when his brig was driven ashore upon a Bahama reef by a vessel-of-war upon which Claude Cassiday junior was a midshipman."

"This same lad was picked up by Kent the Buccaneer at sea in an open boat and was raised upon a pirate deck, serving as an officer; but he escaped in time and it was through him that the buccaneer stronghold was taken."

"But the piratical training of the lad stuck to him, it seems, for he was charged with robbing a woman of money intrusted to his care and dismissed the service, in which he had won promotion and distinction, and a life medal, not to speak of decorations from England, France and Spain for a rescue he made of prisoners whom the Bey of Algiers had made slaves."

"This rescue was spoken of at the time as a most gallant act of heroism."

"Now Claude Cassiday turns up as mate of the North Star, and an interview with Captain Enoch Paul states that he saved the barque in a tornado, when he, the master, had his leg broken and the first mate and three men were washed overboard."

"Whether Thoman & Reed will care to retain a man with a blemished record in his service remains to be seen."

"We learn that Mrs. Cassiday and her daughter sold out their home here and have gone elsewhere to live!"

Such was the article which Claude Cassiday read through from beginning to end, his face white, his lips quivering with emotion.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE CLOUD DARKENS.

It was some time before Claude Cassiday could bring himself to drink the cup of coffee brought to him, and the food he did not taste.

Then he paid his score and went down to the wharf.

A shore boat put him on board the North Star, and he found Captain Paul there with both of the owners.

It was evident that he was the subject of conversation when he entered, for he heard the captain say:

"I believe that it was a trumped up lie against him, for he is incapable of a mean act."

The captain introduced Claude to the owners and they bowed to him with freezing politeness.

Then the captain said:

"I was anxious to get away to-day, Mr. Cassiday, and have been talking to the owners about your becoming first mate of the bark, and assuming command."

Claude glanced up quickly into the faces of each, and replied with some bitterness:

"If the gentlemen have any misgivings about employing a man of my sullied record, I beg them not to do so."

"That is just it, Cassiday, we feel that we can hardly take a man into our service who is a—"

"Hold, sir! if you do not desire my services say so frankly like a man; but do not insult me, for that I will not tolerate."

Mr. Thomas winced under the words, while Mr. Reed moved back a step.

It was evident that they could not bully the young sailor.

Then Captain Paul spoke up:

"As for the barque, gentlemen, it is yours; but it would have been at the bottom of sea but for this gentleman, and it is far more than thanks that you owe him."

"I never knew a better officer, and he ran the ship into port himself, saving your pilotage, and I would like him for my first mate, if you will employ him."

"If not tell him so."

"No, we would rather not employ you, Mr."

Cassiday, and we do not consider that we owe him anything more than his wages," said Mr. Reed.

"Pay me my wages, and I ask no more at your hands," sternly said Claude, who, in the hopes of getting a good berth and thus aiding his mother and sister had controlled his temper thus far.

"Call at my office, sir, and your pay is ready for you."

"Thank you, I shall go as soon as I can get my kit ashore," and turning to Enoch Paul, he said:

"Captain Paul, I thank you for your kind words and appreciate them."

"It is pleasant indeed to meet one who can feel that the devil is not as black as he is painted."

"I trust we may meet again, sir."

"I certainly hope so, Cassiday, and I would no more believe you a dishonorable man than I would believe it of myself."

"God bless you, my boy, and if you ever need a friend, you will know that Enoch Paul is one, for I owe you my life," and tears came into the eyes of the old sailor.

Ignoring the presence of the owners, Claude went to his state-room, packed his kit, and called a sailor to put it ashore.

"I say, Cassiday, you must not think hard of us, for—"

"I will see you at your office, Mr. Thomas, and my money is all I care to have from you, or will take."

The owners saw that the young sailor was in no mood to be trifled with, and were glad when he went ashore.

Claude made his way to the inn where he had put up for the night, and received a room.

Then he went to the shipping-office of Thomas & Reed, and found that those gentlemen had just arrived.

"Mr. Cassiday, as you acted as captain for two months, Captain Paul is willing, and we also, to pay you the wages of a master," said Mr. Reed.

"Does this cut Captain Paul's pay down for the same time, may I ask?"

"It certainly does."

"Then pay him his full wages, for his leg was broken in your service, and give me the pay of first-mate."

"But you were third-mate, and—"

"You have just said that I acted as captain, and as your first-mate was lost, I demand pay as such."

"But it—"

"Oh! if you wish to cheat me out of my just dues, permit me to say that it comes with very bad grace from you to refer to the stain upon my record."

The merchants flinched under the cutting words, and after a word together, handed over the pay of first-mate, while they could not but see that their clerks enjoyed their discomfiture, for they were noted for their mean acts toward employees.

As for Claude, he was determined to make them feel, and acted from this motive rather than have the extra money, though it was most acceptable.

But then he knew well that he had saved their brig for them.

"Thank you," he said, sarcastically, as he signed a receipt, and then he added in a tone of contempt:

"I shall acquaint Captain Paul with the fact that I did not draw his pay, thus depriving him of his just dues."

With this he turned on his heel and left the office, and Messrs. Thomas & Reed were in anything but an amiable frame of mind, for their consciences smote them with the knowledge that they had made very diminutive specimens of anatomy of themselves, in first insulting and then trying to rob the young sailor to whom they owed so much, for there was not a dollar of insurance upon their vessel, and it would have been a fatal loss but for Claude Cassiday.

From the office Claude went to take passage in some vessel bound to New York, and found a packet-schooner that was to sail the following evening.

He engaged a berth and then walked up to see Mrs. Varney, whom he had promised to call on again.

The good lady received him most cordially, insisted that he should remain to supper with her, and spoke most feelingly of the unkind article in the morning paper about him.

Then Claude told her of his experience with Thomas & Reed, and added bitterly:

"I fear my name will be a curse to me now."

CHAPTER XLIV.

WO-TON-KA MAKES A VISIT.

NEITHER MESSRS. THOMAS & REED were happy over the visit of the young sailor to their office.

He had spoken so plainly that they could not fail to understand his words, and they saw by the satisfied expression upon the face of their clerks that they understood too.

Hardly had he been gone an hour when Captain Enoch Paul came in on his crutches.

They supposed that he had seen the young sailor, and so said:

"We are ready to pay you now, captain."

"I am glad you gave Cassiday my pay, gentlemen, for he needed it badly I am sure; but it hits me hard to be cut down just at this time too."

"We will pay you your full wages, Captain Paul," said Mr. Reed, promptly.

"Now that is generous of you, gentlemen, and I thank you," said the captain heartily.

And the money was handed over with the air of men who were doing a generous deed.

Just then a sailor came in from the ship with a letter.

"The mate sent it, sir, fearing it might be important," said the seaman.

The captain read aloud:

"DEAR CAPTAIN PAUL:—"

"I settled with Messrs. Thomas & Reed upon the pay of first mate, so you are to draw your full pay."

"I write this so that there will be no mistake."

"With every good wish,

"CASSIDAY."

The faces of the merchants flushed.

They understood just why Claude had written. Captain Paul frowned and said:

"Then you did not pay Cassiday in full, gentlemen?"

"We paid him as first mate, for he would not accept pay as captain."

The captain smiled, for he understood the situation; but he said quietly:

"I am sorry, for somehow I feel that he needs it more than I do; but of course you gave him a bonus for saving the vessel as he did, and our lives?"

"We did not, for his bearing toward us was not such as to demand favors from our hands."

"You know your own business best, gentlemen, but that man is basely maligned I am sure."

"I thank you, however, for my pay, and will return within the month to assume command again of the barque, if you wish it."

"We do wish it, for we have the utmost confidence in you, Captain Paul."

The captain bowed and was about to respond when all were startled by the appearance of a visitor who just then entered.

It was Wo-ton-Ka, the Witch.

Her dog trotted at her heels, and upon a long staff, in the shape of a cross which she carried, sat the parrot and the raven, one on either arm of the cross.

All in the office knew who she was, and several of the most superstitious turned pale while Captain Paul looked at her in amazement while he muttered:

"A witch, or I'm a land-lubber."

"You gentlemen are Messrs. Thomas & Reed?" said Wo-ton-Ka sternly.

Both of those named bowed in silence.

"You know who I am?" again they bowed.

"Last night it crossed my vision to see you charge one with crime who is more innocent in heart and actions than either of you are."

"He is a sailor, and I saw that he had rendered you a great service."

"But I saw that there was the blackest prejudice in your hearts against him."

"It is for me to see things your limited visions cannot behold, nor your contracted minds grasp, and I tell you now that the man you misjudged is guiltless of the crime which has caused him so much of misery, and which haunts him still."

"I say this, as I fear it is in your hearts to take bread out of his mouth, and the mouths of his mother and sister, by refusing to employ him further."

"Is such your intention, may I ask?"

A deathlike silence rested upon all at her words.

The half-dozen clerks in the office, though awed by the coming of the witch, were delighted at the expression upon the faces of their employers.

As for Captain Paul, he enjoyed the situation immensely.

When Wo-ton-Ka had finished speaking, Mr. Thomas looked at Mr. Reed, and Mr. Reed looked at Mr. Thomas.

"I await your answer," came the stern words from the lips of the witch.

"Well, we have not cared to employ Mr. Cassiday again, madam," at last said Mr. Reed, seeing that the senior member of the firm did not intend to speak, or could not.

"That is your right, gentlemen; but let me suggest to you that there are other merchants here who have more hearts than have you, and are not so small as to be warped in their judgment of a man against whom the charge rests of an unproven crime, but who in all else has proven himself a hero among the manliest of men."

"Yet such persons may be biased if you should go out of your way to prevent Sailor Cassiday from getting a master's or mate's berth here on a good ship, and let me tell you right here, in the presence of your under-paid clerks and this honest-faced gentleman on crutches, that should you raise a finger to harm Claude Cassiday, or utter a word to do so, I will know of it, and I will call again."

With this Wo-ton-Ka wheeled and strode from the room, while the parrot shrieked:

"That's so, mates! Beware! Take care!" As a parting shot the parrot looked back at the junior member, Mr. Reed, and shouted: "Ahoy, the Devil!"

A silence that could be felt followed the departure of the Woman of Mystery, broken by Mr. Reed's low uttered:

"Dence take that bird!"

"Who is the lady?" innocently asked Captain Paul.

"A witch that should be burned at the stake."

"For God's sake, Reed, keep still, or she may hoodoo us," cried Captain Thomas excitedly.

And Mr. Reed kept still, and an unpleasant feeling rested upon all in the office excepting honest old Captain Paul who enjoyed the situation immensely.

CHAPTER XLV.

A SURPRISE FOR CLAUDE.

CLAUDE CASSIDAY was cheered by his visit to Mrs. Varney, and deeply touched when she again urged him to at least accept a few hundred dollars, which could be returned at his convenience.

"Remember, you may find your mother and sister in want, and—"

"But, my dear Mrs. Varney, I have nearly two hundred dollars in cash now, and my passage is paid to New York, so you see I have ample for immediate wants, and I can soon get a paying berth on a good ship I am confident."

With this he departed and wended his way across town to the home of Wot-on-ka the Witch.

The moon rose as he neared the cabin and he beheld the witch seated upon her piazza.

The great dog was near her, also her other pets, which had so alarmed Jacob Gripstein the evening before.

As he drew near the parrot shouted out a welcome:

"Tar ahoy! hello! good boy!"

He dropped his cap and the witch ran and extended her hand to him, while she said pleasantly:

"I was sure that you would come."

"I have had a busy day of it, madam, and am later than I intended to be."

"Better late than never, sir; but may I ask if you saw the paper this morning?"

"I did."

"It was cruel to haunt you with those old troubles and try to injure all of your prospects."

"It did hurt me," said Claude sadly.

"Yes, with those despicable men Thomas and Reed."

"You know that?"

"Oh yes, I discovered what they had done, and knew that they intended to give you a bad name with others, to prevent your getting work."

"You know this?"

"Yes, a shipping merchant met them on the wharf and said that he hoped they would not discharge you, but give you a chance, and they at once opened upon a tirade against you."

"Then I called upon them."

"You?"

"Yes, I called with Holdfast, my Parrot and Raven," and the woman laughed.

"You saw them?"

"Oh yes, and your captain was there."

"Captain Paul?"

"He was, and an honest-faced man he is, and he seemed to enjoy what I had to say to the two merchants."

"What did you say?"

"I simply told them that if I heard of them saying anything that would be a barrier in your way of getting a berth, I would call again."

"Then, with a few remarks from the Parrot I left, and I do not think it will be necessary for me to call again," and the strange woman broke out into a silvery laugh that was contagious, for Claude laughed in spite of himself.

As though in a humor for amusement she continued:

"Now I have something else to tell you."

"Yes."

"You have heard of Moses Gripstein?"

"The old money-lender?"

"That is the man."

"I think you said that he held the mortgage upon my poor mother's home, and was to close it to-day?"

"Yes."

"And it is lost?"

"No."

Claude started.

"What! did you frighten him also into giving longer time?" he asked with sparkling eyes.

"No, I wrote a note telling him to come here and get some money."

"Did he come?"

"Oh yes, money brought him, and then I told him I wished him to write a receipt in full for the loan and interest to date on the Cassiday cottage."

"But I cannot pay it."

"No, but I did."

"You did?"

"Here is the receipt, so I hold the mortgage now, and you need not worry about it."

"God bless you," and Claude took the woman's hand and bending over kissed it.

"Now I do not wish thanks, for the place is worth five times the amount I paid, so I deserve no credit, as my money is safe."

"The Jew fought against it, of course, for he wished to obtain much for little; but with the aid of my *pets* I persuaded him to sign the receipt, and to-day he sent me the canceled mortgage—here it is."

"I believe you are a witch."

"The Jew thought so, for his fright was positively funny."

"But, my dear lady, how can I repay this kindness, for I am almost penniless?"

"I have ample, if you will accept a loan."

"No! no! but I do not know when I can pay you back again."

"You paid Mrs. Varney, and you are as honest as a man can be."

"Take your own time, is all I ask you."

"But now to your gallant deed last night?"

"What was that?"

"What! have you forgotten your act of heroism in rescuing the beautiful heiress, Celeste Hartwell, whom all men adore and would give an arm to have been in your place?"

"Oh yes, I stopped at my home, and was there for a long while."

"Then I saw three men and hid in the shrubbery, so heard their plot."

"I followed and was in time to be of service."

"Yes, and then ran away so as to remain unknown, and all the town wondering to-day, who the gallant rescuer was."

"But how did you know?"

"Holdfast was so uneasy I knew something was wrong, so I took his chain and followed him, and I saw you leave the mansion, heard voices within and knew that there was trouble."

"To-day I heard the whole story, and I knew that you were the brave unknown hero."

"That was Commodore Hartwell's daughter you saved, and besides his high rank and position, he is about the wealthiest man in Boston."

"Well, all I can say is that I am glad I am unknown," was the response of Claude, and he meant it.

CHAPTER XLVI.

UNKNOWN!

THE young sailor remained late at the home of the witch.

He felt that she was willing to hear him talk, and he told her of his life, of his hopes, ambition and despair.

He noticed that the woman had seemed most deeply interested whenever he spoke of Kent the Buccaneer.

She asked him all about the life of the buccaneer and at times appeared moved when he referred to certain acts of Kent's.

But though she saw that Claude Cassiday believed Kent the Buccaneer to be dead, not once did she hint in the slightest way, that the outlaw was still alive.

That was a secret of her own wholly separate from her friendship with Claude Cassiday, and she did not even hint of such a thing as the possibility of Kent's escape from death.

Returning to his tavern Claude passed a better night's rest than he had for a long while, for his heart was relieved about the debt to Mrs. Varney, and his mother's home was not to be sold over his head.

True, he had but little money, and he did not know what the future held in store for him; but then he was not of a despairing kind.

That the paper had commented so cruelly upon him, and the firm of Thomas & Reed had tried to wrong him still more, cut him keenly, but then the friendship of Captain Paul and Mrs. Varney, with the more than kindness of the Woman of Mystery showed him that the world was not all bad, that if there were wicked people in it they were pretty evenly balanced by the good.

The next morning he went down to breakfast feeling refreshed, and ordered a good meal.

The waiter placed the paper before him, acting toward him with unusual respect which Claude could not account for.

But the secret was soon out, for his eyes, as he cast them dreadingly over the columns, fearing another unkind slur at him, fell upon the following:

"THE HARTWELL TRAGEDY!"

"BURGLARS AND KIDNAPPERS MEET THEIR DOOM!"

"MISS HARTWELL'S NARROW ESCAPE!"

"SAVED BY AN UNKNOWN!"

"We have to chronicle this morning a most daring and dastardly attempt to kidnap Miss Celeste Hartwell, the beautiful daughter of Commodore Harold Hartwell, at her elegant home last night."

"Miss Hartwell was in her sitting-room at a late hour last night, with her governess, Miss Du Vale, and the two were engaged on some fancy work for the benefit of the church fair to be held next Thursday."

But for this both ladies would have retired, and being asleep would have been rendered unconscious by the administering of some drug."

"They were just about to retire however, when they were surprised by the entrance into the sitting-

room, which adjoins Miss Hartwell's bed-chamber, of three men."

"The men were in sailor dress, and leveled pistols at the heads of the ladies, while two of them sprang forward and seized them."

"The governess gave a loud cry for help and was felled by a severe blow which partly stunned her and a towel saturated with a drug was thrown over her face."

"In the mean while, Miss Hartwell was roughly seized, and realizing that she would receive severe treatment, as the governess had done, she wisely did not call for help."

"The man who seized her at once rolled a blanket about her, making her helpless, and placed his hand over her mouth, while he ordered his confederates to search the place for booty."

"Then he started down the stairway, and was soon followed by the others, who left the governess where she had fallen."

"From their conversation the villains intended to kidnap Miss Hartwell, holding her for ransom."

"But ere they reached the lower hall Miss Hartwell beheld a man standing there, a pistol in either hand, and as he was dressed in sailor garb, she supposed he was another of the band."

"The villains failed to see him however until he hailed them, demanding their surrender."

"There was a light in the hall and one of the men fired at this, it is supposed, but failed to put it out, the other firing at the one who barred their way."

"He seemed to have invited their fire, for he at once returned it, firing from each hand, and the two men with the one bearing Miss Hartwell dropped dead, and each was shot between the eyes, showing that the stranger knew what he was about."

"Then he sprang upon the third man, released Miss Hartwell, dashed her kidnapper to the floor with stunning force and tearing down the bell-rope in the hall with one jerk, bound his prisoner."

"Telling Miss Hartwell he would go for a constable, as the servants were around and coming to her aid, he at once left the house."

"He did go to the lock up and give the alarm, but since then nothing has been seen of him."

"His prisoner was rescued by the officers, and he was found to be a noted crook, once a sailor and now supposed to be a bay pirate."

"His vessel, a small sloop with one man on board, was captured, but the fellow escaped before he could be secured, for he saw the two boats coming off and jumped overboard."

"The prisoner says he knows nothing of the one who captured him, and that does away with the belief of some that he was a member of the band who relented at the last moment."

"Miss Hartwell also says that the surprise of the kidnappers at seeing him in the hall was intense, and that her rescuer bade her hasten to the aid of Miss Du Vale, as she was doubtless under the influence of the drug."

"The bodies of the two men were removed, after the coroner's inquest, and the prisoner is in jail, and it is well for him that he is protected by such stout walls and iron bars, as there are many friends of Miss Hartwell who would gladly take the law into their own hands, and punish him as he richly deserves."

"The question, therefore, arises as to who is this gallant and fearless rescuer?"

"How did he know of the intended attempt at kidnapping Miss Hartwell, and so opportunely appear upon the scene?"

"That he is a dead shot his human targets are here to prove, and Miss Hartwell says that he was perfectly cool under all that happened, while that he is modest his hiding himself clearly proves."

"Who, then, is this unknown hero?"

CHAPTER XLVII.

KNOWN.

CLAUDE CASSIDAY smiled grimly as he read the last of this article, asking who the hero was.

"If they only knew," he muttered to himself.

"Would I be a hero then, or a thief?"

"I am modest, am I?"

"Well, my modesty is most becoming, for all the sentiment of my rescue would fade away did they know that the hero was none other than one who was dismissed from the navy for the very crime in part he prevented those wretches from committing—robbery."

"My God! must that crime go ever unwhipped of justice?"

"Those letters Mrs. Varney gave me are tell-tale witnesses in part, but I need more, and one day I will have it."

"Yes, the hero must keep hidden, and the heroine, Miss Hartwell, must never know that her preserver is under a ban."

"No, no; let her dream of her rescuer as a man honored among men, not despised and hounded for a crime that he is accused of."

"How beautiful she is, and how bravely she acted through it all."

"She is a noble woman or her face belies her."

"I am glad that I was near to aid her, and some strange something kept me there at my old home until those villains came along and literally told me of their plot."

"I took big chances in those shots, but had I been killed they would have escaped with her I knew."

"But I rejoice that I am unknown."

"I hate thanks, I am too proud to take pay if I was starving, and yet destiny has made of me a life-saver."

"Yes, and it has made me—in the sight of the world—a thief."

He fairly ground the words between his teeth, and then, after a pause of a moment, began his musing again.

"I do believe if they knew that the hero was

Claude Cassiday they would accuse me of being in league with the band of kidnappers and acting as I did to gain favor.

"Harder things have been said of me, and verily I believe the worst would be said if I was known.

"I am glad I am unknown— Ah! here is my breakfast."

He ate his breakfast leisurely and enjoyed it.

Then having nothing to do he picked up the paper again.

His eyes fell upon another page and what he saw there caused his face to flush crimson.

But almost instantly it became pale as he read what had caught his eye.

It was this:

"THE UNKNOWN KNOWN!"

"THE HERO OF THE HARTWELL MANSION TRAGEDY
POSSESSES AN UNSAVORY RECORD!"

"How His Identity Was Discovered!"

"Since the account found elsewhere in our columns, of the tragedy at the Hartwell Mansion last night was put in print, we have received later news of the affair which we hasten to place before our readers.

"Who the rescuer was none of our officials were able to find out, and every one was wondering who he could be and why he was so modest as to hide his identity.

"It was said by the constable and other officers who saw him, that he was dressed in sailor garb, was tall, handsomely formed and wore a short beard.

"He also carried a carpet-bag, it was said, and was a very striking looking personage, Mrs. Hartwell asserting that he was certainly a gentleman.

"But late last night there came into our editorial sanctum a visitor who somewhat startled us: in fact one may say visitors, for there was a woman, an enormous dog and a parrot.

"The woman was one who is known as Wo-ton-ka, the Witch of the Cliff, and the dog and the parrot are her fast friends.

"Asking her to be seated, while our printer's devil, who had come in for copy, darted out in terror, we learned from her that she had come to tell us a secret.

"She said in substance:

"I am here, as I believe, to do my duty as I see it.

"Your paper was cruelly unkind yesterday in attacking one who was dismissed from the navy for an alleged crime, though nothing was proven on him.

"His whole career has shown that he could not be guilty of a crime so base, and since his leaving the navy he has paid back every dollar to the lady whom he was accused of robbing, as this letter will show."

"The Woman of Mystery then handed to us the following:

"I hereby assert that Seaman Claude Cassiday has, in the past few years, since his dismissal from the navy, paid me from time to time sums of money from his earnings, and upon his return to Boston, two days ago, he brought me the balance due, with full interest upon all, which he insisted upon my taking.

"I send this in justice to one whom I believe to be more honest than his accusers, and without his knowledge that I do so; giving it to Wo-ton-ka the Witch, who asserts her knowledge that Claude Cassiday is innocent of the crime with which he is charged.

"OLIVE VARNEY."

"Such is Mrs. Varney's letter, and it certainly is to the credit of Mr. Cassiday that he has paid the debt, and if innocent we only hope he will be able to prove it; but until he does, notwithstanding the knowledge of Wo-ton-ka the Witch, we will believe in his guilt, for we read the full accounts of the court-martial at the time.

"The witch then went on to state that, finding his house closed, and his mother and sister gone, Claude Cassiday sought to find out from her where his people were.

"He remained for some time at her house, and when he left went by his old home.

"Leaping the fence he sat upon the piazza until a late hour, when starting to go he beheld two men approaching.

"Concealed in the shrubbery, for he wished not to be seen, he heard their conversation and discovered that they were awaiting a comrade whom they were to meet at that place.

"The third man soon came, and the plot was to kidnap Miss Hartwell, and the sailor decided to thwart them.

"What he did is well known, and under a cloud, with a tarnished name and record, he sought to hide himself from public view; but Claude Cassiday was the hero of the rescue of Miss Hartwell and it is greatly to his credit that his shadowed life has not blunted his desire to do a noble act, for alone, against these desperate men, he took the chances to prevent their carrying into execution a heinous crime.

"Such is the story of Wo-ton-ka the Witch, and if the description of the rescuer answers to the appearance of Claude Cassiday there is no cause to doubt but that he is the man.

"Thus the unknown becomes known."

The moment that Claude Cassiday finished reading this he went to his room, shaved off his beard, and sending out purchased another suit of clothes in which he at once dressed himself.

Then he went at once to the New York Packet, and pleading indisposition paid extra for a state-room, determined to hide himself in it until the vessel should sail from Boston.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE FAIR PASSENGER.

THE New York Packet was a large and handsome schooner, devoted wholly to carrying passengers.

Her cabin was commodious, her state-rooms large and comfortable, and her captain was noted as a perfect sailor and courteous commander.

There were few passengers: "Only five," Claude heard the steward say, and he got ready to leave his state-room.

He had worn a sailor garb all his life, so now that he was out of the city he put on the neat suit he had when mate and went on deck.

The sun was setting in a bank of piled-up jetty clouds, but the wind was fresh, all sail was up and the schooner was bowling down the bay at a ten-knot pace.

Captain Danvers always made good runs, and it was said that he seldom missed catching the wind as he wanted it.

He was on deck when Claude came out of the cabin and said pleasantly:

"I hope you feel better, sir."

"Yes, thank you." And Claude turned his eyes upon the ridge where was his old home.

He saw too the cabin of the Woman of Mystery, and raising his glass, which he had brought on deck, he leveled it at the flag floating over Wo-ton-ka's home.

"A white field with a golden anchor in it.

"Is that an emblem for me, a hope that all will not be so black in the future?" he mused.

The captain watched him attentively.

He had, when engaging his berth, given only the name, "C. Cassiday."

Then he had returned and taken a state-room, retreating to it at once.

Captain Danvers was a reading man.

He had read the papers the past two mornings and he reasoned well.

When Claude had first come on board he had worn a beard and long hair.

Now his hair was short and his face clean shaven, except a dark silken mustache.

Claude Cassiday was the name given in the papers, and "C. Cassiday" was the name on the schooner Runaway's books.

So the captain knew his man.

He was also a man of decided impressions, and Claude Cassiday's face had caused him to decide that he had not been guilty as charged.

But the captain had a secret and he kept it to himself.

There was one passenger who was "second class," as Claude had first engaged passage, and in the cabin were three others besides the young sailor; but these three were females, and they were all on deck.

The captain wished to see if there was any plot on the part of those passengers and Claude Cassiday.

He knew who the female passengers were, for their names on the book had told him.

These names were:

"MISS DU VALE.

"MISS CELESTE HARTWELL AND MAID."

These were the three now on deck, and with Claude, who had walked forward, and the second-class man were the only passengers.

The captain joined his lady passengers and said pleasantly:

"A beautiful sight, Miss Hartwell, this bay of ours?"

"Beautiful indeed, sir, and we are enjoying the sail immensely; but it looks as though we were going to have a blow to-night," and Celeste pointed to the clouds over in the westward.

"We will have a blow, I guess, but the Runaway does not mind rough weather, and is as stiff as a church in a gale; but permit me to congratulate you upon your escape."

"Thank you, sir, it was a narrow escape, and I shudder now I think of it.

"My father is expected in New York with his fleet about this time, and I am going there to tell him all about it."

"I am glad that so brave a fellow as young Cassiday happened to be near at the time."

"I only learned this evening who my preserver was, as I was too busy packing to read the paper this morning.

"I only wish I knew where to find the gentleman for what a world of gratitude I owe him."

"Then you do not believe all that you have heard of him?"

"Captain Danvers, a truly brave man cannot be a villain, and I do not care what circumstantial evidence may have shown against Mr. Cassiday, I believe him innocent, and this is no sudden opinion of mine, for Miss Du Vale talked it over years ago and that was our decision."

"It certainly was, Captain Danvers, for Celeste has always had a liking for the young sailor, having heard her father and mother speak of him in the long ago," Miss Du Vale said.

"And I agree with you both, ladies; but do you think you would know the young man if you saw him?"

"I would, anywhere," frankly said Celeste Hartwell.

"I have never seen him," Miss Du Vale ventured.

The captain smiled and replied:

"Keep a watch on my crew for him, Miss Hartwell, for the young sailor is so modest he is stealing away from Boston to avoid you; I must go forward now to look to my craft, but will re-

turn in time for supper, and then I have a friend to introduce to you if you will give your kind permission."

"Certainly, Captain Danvers," said Celeste, and involuntarily she took a glance at the crew.

Going forward the captain found Claude Cassiday leaning over the bulwarks, sadly gazing at the distant city, for the schooner was shaping her course now southwest, having put Boston Light astern.

"Pardon, me, Mr. Cassiday, but let me tell you that I know you as the hero who saved Miss Hartwell from being kidnapped, and I would ask you why you are running away from Boston when so many would be glad to show you their appreciation of your courage and gallantry."

"I am not running away, captain, but going to New York, where my mother and sister are, and whom I have not seen for years. I thank you for your kind words, sir."

"He did not come on board knowing that she was coming, that is certain," muttered Captain Danvers, and Claude rose still more in his good opinion.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE VOLUNTEER MATE.

As though to change the subject from himself Claude said:

"We are going to have a blow to-night, sir."

"Yes, and I am short my first mate, whose wife was taken seriously ill and sent to him just as we were casting off.

"My second mate never sailed with me before and I do not know what he is good for; but I have a splendid crew."

"That is a good deal, sir; but pardon me if I offer my services if you need me, for I should really like to be put to work, as it seems strange for me to play passenger."

"I thank you, and if I need you will ask your aid; but permit me to congratulate you upon the great nerve you showed in that affair the other night."

"I have been used to rough scenes, Captain Danvers, nearly all my life, for you know, if you read the papers, that I was reared a pirate," and there was much bitterness in the words.

"I know you are a splendid fellow all round, and Jack Danvers never tells an untruth. But, come; the steward calls supper, and I guess the sea air has given you an appetite."

He slipped his arm in that of Claude Cassiday and led the way aft; but, suddenly, Claude stopped and asked in a hoarse whisper:

"Captain Danvers, who is that lady?"

"Which one?" innocently asked the captain, gazing into Claude's amazed countenance.

"The young and beautiful one?"

"Oh! that is a lady to whom I would like to present you, for, though you have met, you have never been properly introduced."

"Captain, I never saw this lady but once, and then only for a few minutes; but, is she not Miss Hartwell?"

"She is; and without knowing you were on board, both she and her governess spoke most highly of you awhile since."

"Captain Danvers, I must decline to go to supper, for I cannot meet Miss Hartwell."

"Nonsense, my dear young friend—"

"No, I must decline, sir, and I will occupy the berth that I engaged in the second cabin."

Captain Danvers saw that to urge would be useless; so he said:

"I am sorry, Mr. Cassiday, for your decision, and I feel that you are too sensitive. You will excuse me, now."

Claude bowed, and as the skipper joined Celeste, she asked quickly:

"Captain Danvers, who was that young man you were talking to?"

"A sailor, Miss Hartwell, who has just volunteered to help me out, as my first mate is not aboard."

"What is his name, for I have seen him somewhere before?"

"Do you think him handsome?"

"He is more than that, sir; but, you forget to tell me his name?"

"I do not think he cares to have me do so."

"That is strange; but why?"

"Well, he declined to come down to supper, and—but, I will tell you, Miss Hartwell. That is Claude Cassiday, the ex-buccaneer who saved your life two nights ago," said Captain Danvers, warmly.

Celeste Hartwell was indeed a beautiful maiden, and possessed a nature noble and full of truth.

She started at these words of Captain Danvers and said quickly:

"Does he know that I am on board this vessel?"

"He recognized you just now as I was bringing him aft. He asked who you were, and when I told him, he said he would take passage as second-class."

"Yesterday he came aboard and engaged his berth, and this morning he changed it to a state-room and remained there until after we sailed."

"He is proud and sensitive, Miss Hartwell, and has suffered much, so he would shield you."

"If he desires it, I have no right to obtrude upon him; but, before he leaves this vessel I

must thank him, at least, for what he did for me."

"And I owe him my life," added Miss DuVale, "But it would be rude to force ourselves upon him now."

So the captain led the way into the cabin to supper, but rose quickly, saying:

"I declare I forgot that Drew was not aboard, and my second mate is at supper."

"The wind is rising, so pardon me please."

As he reached the deck he beheld Claude Cassidy who said politely:

"Pardon me, captain, but I was about to assume duty as mate, as the gale is coming."

"I had forgotten Mate Drew's absence, Mr. Cassidy, and if you will aid me I will be obliged indeed."

"Then return to your supper, sir, for I will be glad to do so."

Captain Danvers obeyed without a word, saying as he entered:

"I left Mr. Cassidy in charge, as he volunteered to help me— Hark! what a voice he has, and it has the ring of the true sailor!"

From the deck came in a clear ringing voice:

"All hands ahoy to shorten sail!"

Then order after order was given in rapid succession, until the schooner was driving along under double-reefed main, foresail and jib, and with the increasing wind her speed had not diminished.

When Captain Danvers came on deck again he was accompanied by Celeste Hartwell and Miss Du Vale.

It was dark, and the clouds had swept across the heavens, while the sea was a mass of foam under the gale that was blowing.

The captain saw that topmasts had been housed and the sails reefed down close, the mainsail and jib being all the canvas the schooner had set.

Two men were at the wheel and the Runaway was driving along at a wondrous speed.

Both Celeste and Mrs. Hartwell were well wrapped up, and the captain had on his storm rig.

"Standing near the mainmast was a tall cloaked form, with a tarpaulin drawn down over his forehead."

"That man is a splendid sailor, ladies, and I could turn in without a particle of fear," said the captain, and he walked forward.

"I concluded to strip her, sir, as it looks very ugly to-night," said Claude Cassidy.

"It does indeed, and it came on very suddenly."

"Shall I relieve you, Mr. Cassidy?"

"Oh no, sir, I like the excitement of being in charge."

"As you please then," and the captain walked forward among his men.

His new mate was there and at once said:

"I never saw a better officer, sir, than the gentleman who is aiding you."

"Nor I," answered Captain Danvers, and he had the same praise from his old seamen about Claude's handling of a crew and vessel.

Going aft again, for he saw that Claude would not join the ladies, the captain told Celeste and the governess what had been said, and in low tones came from the young girl's lips, as though thinking aloud:

"I pity that man, for his face has a world of sorrow in it, sorrow pent up that can find no relief."

CHAPTER L.

THE TEMPEST.

INSTEAD of growing quieter the wind and sea increased until Captain Danvers felt that the ladies would be safer below decks, and urged their going into the cabin.

"No indeed, sir, I shall remain here, but I do not wish you to stay, my dear governess," said Celeste.

"I will remain with you, Celeste, for it must be stifling in the cabin," assured Miss Du Vale.

"Cassiday was right about its being an ugly night, and if you stay on deck I must protect you," said the captain, and he ran a life-line around them as they stood at the taffrail near the helmsmen.

Just as he turned away, with a loud snap the mainsail halyard parted and the end of the rope struck Captain Danvers and felled him to the deck.

Miss Du Vale uttered a cry of alarm; but Celeste was silent, and her eyes were upon the form that bounded aft, while quick came the order:

"Bring her up, men!"

"Two of you carry the captain below, for he is hurt!"

Both orders were obeyed, while Claude Cassidy called others of the crew to rig a new sheet halliard, which he aided in doing.

It had hardly taken five minutes to get the schooner again on her course, and the men were all ordered to their posts, for the wind was increasing each moment in violence, and the sea was running mountains high.

Claude Cassidy had come aft now, and stood where he could command the entire vessel, while he ordered the second mate to go to the

cabin and report the exact condition of the captain.

The mate soon returned, and said:

"He was stunned, sir, and seems dazed, but says it's all right with you on deck."

"The steward and stewardess are attending him."

"Thank you, sir."

"Go forward now, please, and keep a bright lookout forward for vessels, for we are in the track of them."

The second mate made his way forward, and Claude walked back to the wheel.

He noted how the schooner steered, glanced at the binnacle and saw her course, and then looked out over the raging sea.

It did not take him long to see that the tempest was growing fiercer, and the schooner was beginning to ship heavy seas.

So he gave the order to bring her around before the gale, the mainsail was lowered and under jib, reefed down, alone, she drove along at a terrible pace.

Huge seas followed, threatening to roll over her, but each time she would rise and shoot ahead out of their way.

Going to the life-lines that were around the two ladies, he tightened them, and stood two seamen near to be of service if needed.

Then came the order to every man to lash himself to the ship, though he stood near with no rope about him.

He seemed to fairly revel in the storm, and grow in grandeur himself the fiercer the tempest became, while the eyes of Celeste and Miss Du Vale were riveted upon him, for they, as well as every one else on board the schooner, knew that the life of the ship and all on board depended upon his skill and nerve.

Fiercer and fiercer grew the winds, higher and more vicious rolled the waves, and the schooner labored as though she was fretting her life out of her.

At last, when a wave more savage than the others thundered upon the deck, a cry arose, forward:

"Man overboard!"

"Ay, ay; he cannot be saved!" came sternly from the lips of Claude Cassidy, followed immediately by the command:

"All hands ahoy to lay ship to!"

The mainsail was set enough to give her steerage way, and as she felt its force and drove on, as though about to drive under, she was brought around and a moment after was riding the massive waves in safety as she lay to.

Then for the first time he addressed the two passengers, for raising his tarpaulin he said:

"The schooner rides easily now, so will you ladies not go below?"

"No, we will remain where we are, Mr. Cassidy," answered Celeste, and he turned quickly away, going forward.

But he returned aft again soon and stood with his hand upon the lashed wheel, and thus watched the tempest.

Conversation was out of the question in that wild howling wind and roaring sea, and no one spoke, save now and then an order to a seaman, came from Claude Cassidy's lips.

Thus passed a couple of hours, and as a proof that the gale was dying out the command came to get under way again, and the schooner fairly flew over the waters.

The storm had hardly taken her off her course, and just after dawn she dashed in under the lee of Montauk Point into the quieter waters of Long Island Sound.

The wind decreased each moment now until it dropped to an eight-knot breeze and the second mate took the deck, while Claude Cassidy, after finding that Captain Danvers was sleeping quietly, went and turned in his bunk in the second-class cabin.

When assured that the danger was over a couple of hours after midnight, Celeste Hartwell and Miss Du Vale sought the cabin with no dread as long as Claude Cassidy was in command.

It was late in the afternoon when they again came on deck, and the second mate told them that Mr. Cassidy had just turned in again after his watch, and would not be on duty again until eight bells.

Captain Danvers was feeling much better, though his eyes were blackened and inflamed from the blow, and he had to keep them bandaged.

It was after nightfall when the Runaway made her wharf in New York and Captain Danvers cried enthusiastically:

"Ask Mr. Cassidy to come here, steward, for I wish to congratulate him."

The steward soon returned with the report:

"Mr. Cassidy went ashore, sir, as soon as we touched, leaving the second mate in charge."

"He certainly has not gone," said Celeste, coming from her state-room ready to go ashore, and she added:

"I intended to speak to him."

But Claude Cassidy certainly had gone, and Celeste, her governess and maid, had to leave the schooner without seeing the young sailor, who had so persistently avoided them.

But when the carriage rolled away with the ladies, Claude Cassidy returned to the schooner

and went into the cabin to see Captain Danvers who would not hear to his leaving before morning, as he said:

"Then you can go in daylight to find your mother and sister."

CHAPTER LI.

THE ROVER'S RETURN.

CAPTAIN DANVERS had received a very severe blow in the head and across the eyes, and it would be some days before he would be able to resume command.

He told Claude, upon his return to the schooner, that both ladies had seemed very sorry not to have seen him, and he regretted that he had run off.

"I despise thanks; and more, I knew that, as I stand before the world, a meeting could only be awkward to both of us, and it would be best to avoid them."

"I am branded as a rogue, and because I happen to have been so fortunate as to serve Mrs. Hartwell, I will not force myself upon her generous kindness."

"I fear you are too sensitive, my friend, for I do not believe many look upon you as guilty, and certainly Miss Hartwell maintained your innocence before she had met you."

"She said that a truly brave man could not be a criminal; but I am glad to have you remain aboard with me to-night, and as a man cannot pay passage-money on my ship and work his way, too, I desire to hand you back what you paid."

"But, captain—"

"Now see here, Cassidy, you are my mate, and you must obey me."

"If you don't get a better berth, I'll give you that of second mate, for I do not think the new man I have is up to the position."

"He is good enough as long as I am here and Drew too, but if we were washed overboard he would be useless, and can carry only the best of men."

"So when his month is up you can step in."

"Here, take your money back, and let me tell you that this craft is anchored in port now simply because you saved her, for I know what that blow was, I never experienced a worse one, and the men say you are a better man than I am and that is saying a great deal."

"What Miss Hartwell and her governess had to say I will not gratify your vanity by telling you."

Thus urged, Claude took his passage-money back, remained on board all night as Captain Danvers's guest and the next morning took his leave with the prospect of a berth on the Runaway as second mate at the end of the month.

Hiring a cart Claude put his kit into it, and jumping up on the seat with the driver, told him to drive to the address which Woton-ka the Witch had given him as that where his mother and sister lived.

It was a little cottage on the East River, and an humble widow woman lived there who met Claude at the door and told him that his mother and sister were at work but would be home at night.

"At work?" he gasped.

"Yes, sir, they go out to sew, by the way in the rich peoples' homes along the river."

Claude bit his lips but said:

"Let me introduce myself as Mrs. Cassidy's son, just home from sea."

The woman greeted him cordially and said:

"What a glad surprise it will be, sir, for your mother and Miss Helen believe you are in South America."

"But, come in, sir, for I am glad to welcome you in their absence."

"Can you give me a room with you madam?"

"Yes, sir, I have my son's room, for he's a sailor and away from home for over a year."

"You are very kind," and paying his score to the driver Claude took his box on his shoulder and walked into the cheerful room to which the good woman directed him, while she bustled about to prepare lunch, for, as she told him, they always had their best meal in the evening.

"I'll do the marketing for dinner to-night, Mrs. Veazey, for it is my treat," he said, and after lunch the two had a long talk together, for he was anxious to learn all he could about his mother's work.

"When I left home we were almost rich, Mrs. Veazey, and I never thought my mother would have to work, and my sister too."

"I have been unfortunate, and have had to pay a large debt, but it is paid now and my earnings can all go to mother's support, so that this is her last day of work, for I did not come home penniless, and I have a berth promised me on a packet vessel."

Then Claude went out and got a quantity of flowers with which he decorated the room of his mother and sister, and he bought a lot of marketing, while Mrs. Veazey exerted herself to have a feast.

When the sun touched the horizon he saw his mother and sister coming, so ran into the little parlor, while Mrs. Veazey met them at the door.

"There's company to dinner to-day, Mrs. Cassidy and Miss Helen, and it's somebody I'm most particular to have you meet."

"Oh! your son has come home," cried Mrs. Cassidy, seeing the glad light in the widow's eyes.

Mrs. Veazey could keep the secret no longer, for she blurted out:

"No, it's not my son that's come, but—"

With a cry of joy Mrs. Cassidy sprang into the hallway to be clasped in the arms of her tall, handsome boy.

She half disengaged herself, for could that tall, darkly-bronzed, splendid-looking man, with his great broad shoulders and long silken mustache be the boy she had last seen in his midshipman's uniform?

But there was no mistake, it was Claude, and Helen, beautiful, graceful Helen came in for her share of kisses while her brother said:

"Mother, you are not a day older, and Helen, you are as lovely as you are good."

Then he told them of his return home, of his paying Mrs. Varney every dollar of the debt due her and said bitterly:

"And there is more to tell to-morrow, for to-night all must be joy, mother, and Mrs. Veazey has prepared the most delicious of dinners for us."

Thus did the young sailor return to his home, a different home from the one he had left, but yet the abiding-place of those he so dearly loved.

CHAPTER LII.

A CURSE UPON HIM.

TRUE to his resolve Claude Cassidy would not speak of one unpleasant event in his life on that evening of his return home.

He and Helen sung duets together, she playing upon the guitar, and he got out his flute and played with her, also a Mexican zither which he had learned to play while in Mexican waters.

He brought the souvenirs out and found something for Mrs. Veazey, too, and the evening passed off delightfully.

But the next morning Claude put his foot down, that neither his mother or sister were to go to work, so Helen went and explained to their employers that they must give up their working and get their wages.

Then Mrs. Cassidy told of her losses and the struggles they had known, adding:

"And now we have lost our home and all in it."

"No, mother, for Wo-ton-ka saved it for you," and he handed over the cancelled mortgage and explained the situation.

Then he told of his adventure at the Hartwell Mansion and handed over the two papers containing the notices regarding him, for he had purchased them.

"Miss Hartwell is a noble girl, my son."

"I never admired her mother, who was an ambitious, proud woman, and it is said her death alone saved her from swamping her husband's large fortune, for he yielded to her in all things, and was a quiet man liked by all, I believe, while he was your father's friend."

"But Miss Hartwell is loved by every one."

"Yes, and I never saw a more beautiful girl," said Helen.

"I am so glad you were able to save her from those ruffians, brother."

"I never saw a more beautiful girl, Helen, but I know one equally as lovely," and Helen blushed as she knew that her brother meant her.

"But, mother," he continued, seriously; "is it not terrible to be hounded as I am by the world? But what can I do?"

"Live it down, my son, as you can do, and yet work to place the guilt where it belongs, for you must do that."

"Yes, I must, if I wish to clear my name of dishonor; but now to our future, mother?"

"Yes."

"You will return to the house to live, and let me pay that good woman back as I can?"

"Wait yet awhile, wait and see how you are received as an officer on the packet."

"I have in bank in your name, five hundred dollars, drawing interest, but which will help us until you can get a good berth, which you need not be in a hurry to do."

"If you get a good place then you can pay that money, with its accrued interest to Wo-ton-ka, on our home, and all will be well."

"But if you are to be insulted and abused in Boston, then we must not return there."

"I would like to keep you nearer home, but then as mate of a large deep-sea vessel you can get much better pay, and I would advise that you seek such a position."

"You are right, mother, and I will look about at my leisure for such a berth, keeping the Runaway in reserve."

So the days passed on and Claude began to look about for a berth on a large vessel.

He heard of a full-rigged ship that wanted a first mate and went at once to the office.

He stated his business and the merchant looked straight at him, while he asked:

"Are you the Claude Cassidy who was once in the navy?"

"Yes, sir."

"We don't want you then."

Claude turned away, not daring to trust himself to speak.

He then went to see about a berth upon a barque bound to South American ports.

"What did you say your name is?" asked the agent.

"Claude Cassidy, sir."

The agent looked at the young sailor, then turned and walked over to a file of a newspaper and glancing over it brought it over to where Claude stood.

"Is this you that reference is made to in this paper?"

It was the file of Boston papers containing the articles on Claude Cassidy's record.

"Yes, sir."

"We do not wish a man who is thus advertised," said the agent.

Claude's face flushed and he went away.

Several days after he reported on board ship to a captain who wished a first mate.

His heart almost failed him as he saw the name of the ship:

"YANKEE GIRL, OF BOSTON."

But he approached the captain and introduced himself.

"See here, Mr. Cassidy, I would employ you in a minute, but this vessel is from Boston, and we were there loading cargo when you came in on the North Star, and my owners wouldn't have it if I shipped you."

"You know best, sir," and Claude felt that he bore a name upon which a curse seemed to rest.

So after other trials where his name at once turned the employer against him, Claude Cassidy said:

"Mother, I will have to accept the berth on the Runaway, for I am doomed if I mention my name."

So Claude went down to meet the Runaway when she came in on her semi-weekly run.

Captain Cassidy greeted him most cordially, and was looking himself again after his accident.

"By the way, Cassidy, I have a letter here for you."

"A letter for me, sir?"

"Yes, I took Miss Hartwell back on my last run, and she asked me to give you a letter, as she would write what you would not allow her to express in words."

"Come into the cabin and I will give it to you, and also a puff the paper gave you in Boston for your saving the schooner, for I gave the editor the facts of the case; but I do think they might have worded it differently."

"Ah! here is the letter, and here the paper."

"Now, tell me if you are going to ship as mate when I come again?"

"Yes, sir, if you still wish me, for, frankly, I tried at a dozen agencies to get a berth on a deep-water cruiser and my name was sufficient—all had heard of me," and Claude laughed bitterly.

"Well, it is a shame, that's all; but how did you find your mother and sister?"

Claude told about his arrival at their home, promised to be on hand for duty when the packet came again, and started home, the letter and paper in his hand.

CHAPTER LIII.

A LETTER AND A PAPER.

THERE was a tree standing on a hill overlooking East River, and now Claude Cassidy often stopped to enjoy the view of Hell Gate, watching the vessels go through that caldron of waters which years ago was such a terror to mariners.

He stopped now at this tree on his way home from the Runaway and took out his letter and paper.

The former was addressed in a feminine hand:

"MR. CLAUDE CASSIDAY,

"Kindness of

"CAPTAIN DAWSON

"Of The Runaway."

But Claude did not first open the letter, the seal, an anchor surrounded by stars, remaining unbroken.

He turned first to the paper and read:

"THOUGH UNDER A CLOUD, A HERO STILL!

"THE PACKET RUNAWAY SAVED FROM WRECK!

"CLAUDE CASSIDAY AGAIN!

"We again have to present Mr. Claude Cassidy to our readers, and in a heroic light."

"He is too well known after his early career as a pirate, and later dismissal from the navy for alleged robbery, to need an introduction, so we will dive at once in medias res, by saying that Captain Danvers's Packet Schooner Runaway, was saved from loss by the acts of the young sailor."

"By a strange coincidence, Miss Hartwell, her governess and maid took passage for New York on the same vessel in which Claude Cassidy had secured a berth."

"The latter was on his way to New York to visit his mother, who we learn is living there now, and Miss Hartwell went to New York to acquaint her father with the facts of her attempted kidnapping, as soon as his flagship reached New York."

"It was a surprise to both to meet on the schooner, and Mr. Cassidy declined to give the ladies an opportunity to thank him for all he had done for them, and kept to himself."

"The Runaway sailed without her first mate, and she went out into the teeth of a gale."

"Cassiday volunteered his services and took the first watch and all unite in saying a vessel was never better handled."

"We all remember the terrible storm and our anxiety for the vessels that had sailed that day, and how many were lost; but the Runaway weathered it grandly, though forced to sea and lay to, and losing two of her men overboard, crippling her captain, and injuring several others of her crew."

"Through all, with her captain in the cabin suffering severely from the snapping of the main-sheet halliard, which gave him a blow across the eyes, Claude Cassidy commanded the ship, and but for his skill and courage she would have been lost, and upon this opinion there is not a dissenting voice."

"The next evening the schooner ran to her wharf in New York, making the fastest run she had ever made, the captain says."

"So again does Claude Cassidy, the young ex-buccaneer, come to the front as a hero, and great pity it is that his life is a clouded one, for, of course, one who bears the stain that brands his brow can never hope to win lost honor and the regard of his fellow-men, whatever admiration they may feel for his great nerve, daring and skill."

Such was the article which Claude read, and he groaned forth:

"My very courage is used as a means of bounding me, of keeping the infamy connected with my name constantly before the public."

"So be it; but every craft has a haven, and I will find mine at last."

It was some time before he dared break the seal of the letter he had with him.

He seemed to shun doing so, but at last he gained the courage and opened it.

The letter was as follows:

"MY DEAR MR. CASSIDAY:—

"You have so persistently avoided me that I have not been allowed to personally express the deep, heartfelt gratitude I owe you for your noble service in my behalf, for from what did you not save me by your courage and manliness in facing odds and death for my rescue?"

"I can understand why one who has been wronged as you have, and possessing your sensitive nature and the spirit of a brave man, should shun public gaze, and wish to hide from thanks so richly merited; but I feel hurt that you did not believe that both Miss Du Vale and myself were not of the kind to wish to shrink from expressing the deep gratitude we owe you, not only for your effectual aid at our home that awful night, but again upon the sea when your skill and nerve saved the schooner from going down."

"I told my father, upon meeting him in New York, all that you had done, and he will seek you out and express his appreciation of your services for his daughter and Miss Du Vale, my loved governess."

"I am glad to know from Captain Danvers that there is a possibility of your becoming first mate of the Runaway, and should you accept the position, I shall be glad to have you visit us at Overlook Manor when next you visit our port, and more, I shall certainly expect you to do so to show that you are not really angry with me for causing you to risk your life in saving me from kidnappers."

"Please present my kindest regards to your mother and sister, whom I would have called on when in New York, could I have ascertained their address."

"Expecting to see you when you visit Boston, believe me,

"Ever gratefully yours,

"CELESTE HARTWELL."

"Celeste Hartwell is truly a woman among women, as her letter shows."

"Yes, I will make one visit there, and tell her why, for she can understand it, I can never make another," and Claude walked slowly homeward.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE COMMODORE.

THE majestic flag-ship Sea Lion sailed up New York Bay the very evening that the Runaway arrived in port.

Astern of her came the squadron of four vessels, and they dropped anchor off Chambers street, in the North River, which was then the fashionable part of the city, and Commodore Harold Hartwell went ashore and engaged rooms at the hotel where he always put up when in town.

He had hardly finished his dinner when the waiter coming in said:

"A lady to see you, sir."

"A lady to see me?" and the commodore sprang to his feet as he heard the rustling of a dress in the corridor.

He was a handsome man, yet under fifty, though his hair had whitened like one who bore the weight of three score years and ten.

But otherwise he did not appear a day older than he was, and in his elegant uniform was a very striking looking man.

Before he had time to consider, into the room swept his daughter to his great amazement and delight, for he idolized Celeste.

"My darling child! you here in New York?" he cried.

"Yes, father, and my governess and maid are with me."

"We just arrived, and when we went to our own rooms the landlord came up to say that you had come into port a short while before and was in the hotel, so I decided to come at once to see you."

"Have you been to dinner?"

"We had supper on the packet, for we are just over from Boston."

"I am delighted to see you, Celeste, and especially flattered that you ran over to meet me here, for I will not have time to go to Boston, as we sail for southern waters in a couple of days."

"I feared from your letter, father, sent from Charleston, that you would not be able to get home and so I came here, as I have something most important to tell you."

The commodore looked a trifle uneasy at this, and said anxiously:

"Nothing gone wrong at home, I hope, Celeste?"

"Yes, sir; but you shall hear all," and she told the story of the attempt to kidnap her.

The commodore listened with the deepest interest, and then said:

"Now tell me who this brave young sailor was, for I shall secure for him a commission in the navy."

"That is impossible, sir."

"Impossible? Why?"

"He has held a commission in the navy won by gallantry and has been dismissed."

"Great God! you do not mean that it was Claude Cassiday who saved you?"

"I do, sir; it was Claude Cassiday."

The commodore had turned deadly pale and and now sprung to his feet and paced the floor deeply moved.

"Why should it so move you, father, that Claude Cassiday was my rescuer?"

With an effort the commodore controlled himself and said huskily:

"Because—because as a disgraced officer I can do him no service in return."

"Father, he is a poor man, I should judge, and you are a rich one."

"By reading the accounts in the papers you will see just how he is maligned in spite of his noble deeds."

"But he was dismissed for stealing."

"Bah! that is nonsense in his case, whatever seeming proof they trumped up against him."

"You are his warm defender, certainly."

"Do you wonder that I am, father?"

"I am sorry that he was the one who served you so well."

"And I am glad, for he cannot get a commission again, and I have reason to believe that he and his family are very poor, so you can help him."

"I will send him a check for—"

"Father, don't insult Mr. Cassiday, for he would throw your check into your face with scorn; but you are rich, very rich, and own shares in some fine vessels, and it would be easy for you to have him appointed master of one, though I believe if he knew it came from you he would refuse the berth."

"I never spoke a dozen words to him in my life, but he has suffered much, he feels that the hand of mankind is raised against him, that he is shunned and feared, and I believe, he would die before he would accept a favor."

"He saved me from a sad fate, saved you a great deal of money, and the only way you can repay him is by doing him a service through others."

"I will gladly do it, my child."

"I know that, my father; but then I owe Claude Cassiday another debt."

"Indeed, and what may the second one be?"

Celeste told of their voyage on the Runaway and all that had occurred to the honor of the young sailor.

"And he was coming here to see his mother and sister, you say?"

"Yes, father."

"So they have left Boston?"

"As I understand it, Mrs. Cassiday lost her money, mortgaged her home and moved to New York, so you see they are in distress; but you will see by the paper that Claude Cassiday paid the money due Mrs. Varney, and with interest, and this doubtless kept them poor; but with a position as master of a good ship he could readily earn a good support."

"He is very young for the place of master, Celeste."

"He was a pirate officer as a boy, piloted a vessel-of-war in a storm in the Bahamas to a place of safety, he led an expedition to rescue American prisoners held by the Bey of Algiers and saved the barque North Star from being lost, and the Runaway also, so if he is capable of holding the position, what matter his years, father?"

"You are a strong advocate, Celeste."

"He has given me reason to be."

"Well, I will look him up and express my gratitude, and it is most heartfelt, and then I will see that he gets a good ship."

"You dear, good old father," cried Celeste, joyously.

CHAPTER LV.

THE REFUSAL.

CLAUDE CASSIDAY found a letter awaiting him at home, to his great surprise, for he had not a correspondent in the world.

His mother was wont to go to the mail every week or two, and had found a letter there for Claude.

It simply read:

"Please call at the office of Prim & Company, shipping merchants, and you will hear something to your advantage."

Early the next morning Claude presented himself at the office of Prim & Co., and was shown into Mr. Prim's private room.

Claude knew the firm as a rich one, and that they had half a dozen fine ships in various trades, so his heart swelled with hope that he would get a good paying berth.

Mr. Prim looked at him with interest, and said politely:

"Sit down, Mr. Cassiday."

Claude obeyed.

"Mr. Cassiday, you are a first-class sailor, I believe?"

"I have had a great deal of experience, sir."

"In what capacity, may I ask?"

"From cabin boy to captain, sir."

"You were once with Kent the Buccaneer, I hear?"

"Yes, sir, as a lieutenant, because I could not help myself, having been picked up at sea in an open boat by him."

"Well, the experience was good, at least?"

"It was a sad experience, sir, viewed from older years."

"Doubtless; but you were also a naval officer?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why did you leave the service?"

"I was dismissed, sir, accused of appropriating funds to my own use, which belonged to another."

"Ah, I see, I see! but was it proven?"

"The money was gone, sir, and circumstances pointed strongly to me as the thief, so I was dismissed."

"But you were not guilty?"

"Had I been, sir, I would never have attempted to live an honorable life."

"Well said, sir; but you acted as captain of the Boston bark North Star?"

"Yes, sir."

"And brought the Packet Schooner Runaway into port through that storm of some weeks ago?"

"The captain was injured, sir, and I took his place."

"Well, Mr. Cassiday, I have a vessel, a full-rigged ship, which I intend to send out in the China trade, and I am urged by one who is my silent partner to place you in command and thus liquidate a debt of gratitude he owes you."

"He left it with me to decide after I had seen you, and I confess I believe you in every way capable of taking the vessel as its master."

"The pay is large and the voyage will hardly be for less than a couple of years, as I wish you to touch at various ports going and coming, and you have the chance of remaining with us if all goes well."

"I sincerely thank you, Mr. Prim, for your kindness, but may I ask to whom it is I am indebted for the recommendation, and who owes me a debt of gratitude?"

"Well, confidentially I will tell you who my silent partner is, for he owns one-half the vessel, which is new and a very large clipper-ship A. No. 1 in all respects."

"And is it your partner that says he owes me a debt of gratitude?"

"Yes, sir, and you will find the ship as fine a craft as sails under the American flag and she bears the name of the loveliest young lady I ever met—egad, if I wasn't an old bachelor I'd ask her to be my wife."

"You did not tell me the name, sir?"

"Ah, yes, it is the clipper ship Celeste Hartwell, and—"

"May I ask if Commodore Hartwell is half owner in the vessel?" suddenly said Claude.

"Yes, he is my partner."

"And he it was who asked you to give me the berth of master of the ship?"

"He did indeed, for he told me he was most anxious to liquidate the double debt of gratitude he owed you, for he told me all about the kidnapping scrape."

"You are a lucky dog, Cassiday."

If Mr. Prim had been a married man he would have learned to hold his tongue, and not make the unfortunate remark that he did, for sternly came the words:

"Mr. Prim, I thank you, sir, very much for the honor done me; but I do not perform acts such as I did for Miss Hartwell for the sake of reward, and Commodore Hartwell cannot cancel what he calls a debt of gratitude by paying me as he desires to!"

"What! you do not mean to say that you refuse the offer?"

"I do, sir. Most decidedly, for if I was dying of hunger I would not accept pay for a service rendered from a sense of duty."

"Well! well! but you will reconsider, for of course, the commodore means well, only he is proud and hates to be under an obligation."

"And I am too proud, Mr. Prim, to accept one in payment for duty rendered."

In vain did Mr. Prim urge, for Claude was resolute, and again thanking the shipping merchant for his good intentions he took his leave.

Upon returning home he explained the situa-

tion to his mother and sister and they both asserted that he had acted as he should have done.

"The bait was a tempting one, mother, but I could not sink pride and accept the ship, which is a beauty, as I saw her at the wharf only yesterday and went over her."

"It would be a splendid command, but it would be no more than so much pay for value received, and I as a branded robber have to be more particular than were I differently situated."

"Yes, and you will yet get a vessel, Claude, where you are not accepting favors in commanding her," said his mother.

"Yes, you will have to take the Runaway's mateship for the present, brother, until something better offers: but I am so glad you refused the ship under the circumstances," Helen said.

CHAPTER LVI.

A SECOND DISMISSAL.

THE pretty packet schooner came in on her run from Boston with a crowded list of passengers, and as soon as she was alongside of the dock Claude Cassiday stepped on board.

"I have come, sir, to report for duty," he said, after Captain Danvers had welcomed him warmly.

"All right, my young friend, I left my other mate off to put you on."

"Mr. Drew, this is my second mate, Mr. Cassiday."

Mr. Drew gave Claude a warm greeting and at once yielded the deck to him as eight bells struck, his time for going off.

That night Claude told Captain Danvers of his refusal of the position offered him by Commodore Hartwell.

"I know just how you feel, my lad, but I almost wish you had taken it, for it is a splendid ship, and you know you are but a boy in years."

"Yes, sir, but I could not accept pay thus gilded over."

"Well, I hope you'll work into something better than I have given you, and I'll keep my eye open for you, and you do the same, for you are free the moment anything good offers."

"Thank you, sir, you are indeed my friend," and Claude sailed on the Runaway as the second mate. When off duty in Boston his first duty was to go and call upon Mrs. Varney, with whom he took tea, and then he made his way to the home of Wo-ton-ka.

He found the Woman of Mystery alone with her pets, and she received him as she might a very dear friend.

He opened his heart to her and told her all that had happened, and then said:

"I find that my mother deposited in a bank the money I sent her, when in the service, and in my own name, so I drew that out to-day and it amounts to just one-half the sum you paid on the mortgage of the cottage, so here it is."

"But I do not need the money, sir."

"Still it liquidates in part the debt, and mother has ample for her needs now, while I am making a fair support."

"If you urge it, I will take it; but only on condition that should you need it you will come and ask for it."

"Certainly, but I do not see now that I shall need it, or any part of it, thank you."

Promising to come again to see her, Claude returned to the schooner, and upon his next coming into port it was his intention to call upon Celeste Hartwell and have that done with, for he did not wish his pride to make him seem rude.

It was sunset when the Runaway drew alongside of her wharf in Boston, just one month after Claude had shipped on board of her.

The owners were there to receive her, and they entered the cabin and were closeted for some time with Captain Danvers.

At last they left and Claude was sent for to come to the cabin.

"My dear lad, do you know I am almost heart-broken over what I have to say to you, but I must do it."

"Were I a rich man, did I not have a large family depending upon me for support, I would leave this schooner now; but my hands are tied and I can only obey my cruel orders."

"If your orders refer to me, Captain Danvers, I pray you do not let friendship for me prevent your doing your duty," said Claude, his heart sinking within him with dread of coming evil.

"They do refer to you, Cassiday."

"I expected it, sir."

"You saw the owners come on board?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, they tell me that the schooner's business is dropping off because you are a mate on board, that passengers make all sorts of objections about sailing with you, and that they have been forced to ask me to discharge you."

"Certainly, Captain Danvers."

"I refused point-blank and they said that I should go if I did not, and you also."

"As I saw that I could not save you I yielded, and now you know the exact situation, my poor boy."

"It is hard, captain; but brand a man with a

crime and be he ever so guiltless it will yet hang like a curse about him.

"I have to thank you, sir, for many kindnesses, and to relieve the schooner at once of my hateful presence."

"But, Cassiday, as I urged that you should at least have had a notice, I obtained for you two months pay extra."

"No, Captain Danvers, I will not accept pay I have not earned."

"There is just one month's pay due me to-day, and that only will I take."

"But you will return with me to New York as my guest?"

"No, sir, for the schooner is not your own; if so, I would do so."

"I shall take the stage that leaves at midnight, for I may glean surcease from sorrow by the scenery through which we pass."

"I cannot tell you, Cassiday, how badly I feel about this, and as it was my offer that got you again humiliated, I shall atone for it in some way."

Claude was silent a moment and then said slowly:

"Captain, you have told me that in every instance where you could have secured me a berth, my name has been the stumbling block at once to a refusal?"

"Yes, such has been the case."

"Then I will tell you a secret."

"I intend to change my name."

"Change your name, Cassiday?"

"Well, not exactly, sir, for my name is Claude Searle Cassiday, and as the last name, which my father honored, and the world says I dishonored, is the Jonah, I shall drop it and seek work as simply Claude Searle."

"I believe you are right—yes, you are," said Captain Danvers deliberately.

CHAPTER LVII.

THE VISIT.

It was with a feeling of deep regret that Captain Danvers saw his young friend leave his vessel; but he was glad to feel that Claude understood his position and did not censure him for his dismissal.

Leaving the schooner Claude went to the stage office and engaged a seat on the coach that was to leave at midnight.

Then he made his way rapidly along the streets, though decided upon some purpose.

He was dressed in the neat suit he had worn as a mate, and looked his very best.

His steps led him to the gate of the Hartwell Mansion.

Then he paused as though undecided and asked himself aloud:

"Must I go in?"

He must have answered himself in the affirmative, for he passed through the gate and made his way up toward the mansion.

A light burned in the broad hall, and as he drew near he heard the notes of a harpichord and then the voice of a woman arose in song.

He stood upon the piazza his hand upon the knocker, while he listened like one spell-bound.

It was Celeste's voice, and she sung exquisitely, while as a strange coincidence she was singing a song of the sea, of

"My sailor-lad lover

Who will never come back to me."

When the last notes died away and no voices were heard in conversation Claude was convinced that she was alone, that there were no visitors, so he let fall the massive brass knocker.

There was heard the rustle of silk and then Celeste herself came to the door.

"Miss Hartwell, permit me to introduce myself—Mr. Cassiday."

"I am really glad to see you, Mr. Cassiday, and would have known you without the introduction; but I suppose that was proper," and she laughed.

She shuddered as she crossed the hall, and turning toward him said:

"It is strange that your coming should bring up the scene of that night so vividly to me as to cause me to shudder at its remembrance."

"It is but natural that you should, for you are unused to such scenes, Miss Hartwell, and I consider you a brave woman to still remain in this mansion."

"I do not wish to be a coward, but I shall never love this home as I did before it all happened—why my fancy even now pictures those two dead men lying there; but then I must not bring up such grim phantoms to you, Mr. Cassiday."

"I am used to grim phantoms, Miss Hartwell; but I fear the living far more than I do the dead."

"Of course, there are moments when specters flit before me, men whom I have slain rising in ghostly form, brought up by a fevered brain, perhaps, to haunt me; but it is the living that I have reason to fear."

He spoke in a low, earnest tone, almost as though he was thinking aloud.

"Let us speak of the living, though, rather than of the dead, and tell me when you arrived."

"Only to-night."

"I thought I recognized the Runaway coming

up the harbor; but as you had passed the mansion on a former coming into port, and also been twice here without coming to see me, I had almost feared that you were not intending to do so."

"No, I came because I wished to tell you why I almost rudely shunned you—why I should not come here."

"You received my note, of course?"

"Yes, and thank you for it."

"And I am glad that you accepted a position under Captain Danvers, even though you give it up for a better and more lucrative one."

"I left the schooner to-night, Miss Hartwell, and leave by the midnight coach for Boston."

"Indeed! then you have accepted a position more congenial to your tastes?"

"No, I am utterly adrift."

"Have you not accepted some good offer that you must have had, for good commanders are scarce?" almost anxiously asked Celeste.

"No, but I have to thank your kind father, Miss Hartwell, for interesting himself in my behalf, for the New York house of Prim & Co. made me an offer of master of as fine a craft as floats."

"And you refused it?" eagerly asked Celeste.

"I felt constrained to do so, when I knew that your father offered it, that the vessel, named after you, was his property, and that it came as reward for the service I was so fortunate as to render you."

Celeste looked disappointed.

"I am sorry you thought best to decline, Mr. Cassiday."

"No, you respect me more for it, I am sure; but I wish to say to you that I did not leave the Runaway of my own accord, for I was dismissed to-night."

"Dismissed?" cried Celeste, indignantly.

"Yes, the owners said that my name as mate hurt their business, and had Captain Danvers dismiss me."

"They threw me a sop in extra pay, which I of course refused, and I felt more deeply for poor Captain Danvers than for myself, for I am getting well used to being given a refusal for work on account of the stain upon my honor."

"This is an outrage," said Celeste, indignantly.

"It is for this reason, Miss Hartwell, that I would not compromise you by coming to your house, and I am here now to thank you for your generous letter, and bid you farewell."

He rose as he spoke, and Celeste knew not what to say.

She felt deeply for this brave, splendid man, fighting so nobly against the cruelest of fates, and she would have done anything to help him, but she was powerless.

So she saw him go out into the darkness of the night with what words of comfort she could utter, saw him go to again face a cruel world from whom he could expect no help, no pity, and yet to whom he would not humble himself to seek their sympathy.

"Poor, poor fellow!" she muttered, as she stood watching his departure.

Then she said, with sudden, angry tone:

"Old Prim, or father, bungled that affair most sadly, for, of course, he would accept no favor from me or from Commodore Hartwell."

CHAPTER LVIII.

FROM AN ASSASSIN'S KNIFE.

CLAUDE CASSIDAY reached New York with a heavy heart.

He knew that the little money he had given his mother would not last long, and what he had would be but a month's support.

He had paid Wooton-ka the money that he had drawn from the bank, looking for a steady income to be coming in from his work.

But that ended with his dismissal.

To make matters worse he found his mother really ill.

He had noticed that her health was failing, and was in hopes of giving her a change, which the doctor had said she needed.

But now came the blow upon him of finding his mother ill in bed.

He dared not tell her that he had lost his place, but he told Helen, and they talked over matters together, for he made his sister his confidante in all his sorrows.

He went out each morning to hunt for work, and in each instance he gave his name as Claude Searle, and once he got a good position, to find it fade from his grasp the next morning when he reported for duty, and was told that he had been recognized as Claude Cassiday though giving his name as Searle.

When thus recognized he frankly told why he had given but part of his name; but it was taken as an intention on his part to deceive, and he lost his position.

When the doctor's bill was paid, and Mrs. Veazey had her month's board, Claude Cassiday found himself with but a few dollars left.

His mother had learned of his dismissal from the schooner, and she felt about how her son was situated, and it retarded her recovery to perfect health.

One night, in almost despair, Claude hardly dared go home, and he roamed along the wharves.

He had seen a large vessel-of-war come into the harbor and anchor, and he stood looking at her through the darkness and mist.

A boat came ashore and landed below, and one person sprung ashore, the boat returning.

Drawing his cloak around him the one who landed came along the deserted wharves at a quick step, when, suddenly, out from the shadow of a house, sprung two men directly upon the stranger.

A swinging street-lamp flashed back the gleam of steel in their hands, and Claude Cassiday knew that their intention was to kill.

One blow was given, hard and sharp, and a second would have followed in the back of the victim, when Claude Cassiday dealt the assassin a blow that would have felled an ox, and he dropped like a dead man.

Seizing the other he hurled him to the ground and placed his foot upon his neck, while he said:

"If you are armed, sir, hold these two men while I secure a city guard, for I trust you are not badly hurt?"

"One of them knifed me in the arm, my brave fellow, but as I recognize them as deserters from my ship, who threatened my life, I will ask you to hail my vessel and I'll send them aboard."

"The name of your vessel, sir?"

"The flag-ship Sea Lion. I am so hoarse from a cold I cannot hail."

Like a trumpet rung out the hail:

"Flag-ship Sea Lion ahoy!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" floated back from the ship.

"The commander desires that you will send his boat back to the shore at once."

"Ay, ay, sir."

The boat was just nearing the vessel when it was ordered back, and, as it landed, Claude Cassiday had his two prisoners ready.

They were sullen now and revengeful, but they had had a taste of what the rescuer was made of.

"Berkeley, here are those two deserters who left us when we were in port last and vowed to kill me."

"They made the attempt to-night, wounded me slightly, and but for this brave gentleman would have killed me."

"Take them to the ship and put them in double irons."

"Ay ay, sir," answered officer Berkeley, and the men were towed into the boat in short order.

"Now, sir, I'll ask your further kind aid to see me to the hotel."

"Certainly, sir," said Claude and he offered his arm.

Arriving at the hotel the officer was given a comfortable room, and reaching it he threw off his cloak.

Claude Cassiday started, for the uniform of a commodore was revealed, and it could be no other than Commodore Harold Hartwell.

But the commodore dropped into a chair faint from loss of blood, and Claude hastily rung the bell and ordered a surgeon sent for, while he stripped the coat off and stanching the bleeding.

"I was in hopes that he had merely cut your coat, touching the arm; but his blade I see sunk to the bone, though it is not very serious I hope."

"It would have been fatal but for you, sir, and worse, I have with me a large sum of money which those men knew about I am sure, so they had a double purpose, to kill me for punishment I had inflicted upon them and to rob me as well."

"I owe more to you than words can repay."

"Your name please?"

Claude hesitated an instant and replied:

"Claude Searle, sir."

The commodore gazed at him with deep interest, and asked:

"Have we ever met before, Mr. Searle?"

"Not that I recall, sir."

The surgeon now arrived and dressed the wound, skillfully aided by Claude, who would then have retired but was restrained by the commodore.

"You are a sailor, Mr. Searle?"

"Yes, sir."

"Pardon me, but I observe a ring upon your finger, may I ask you where you got it?"

"It was my father's sir."

"Your father's?"

"He was killed in Mexico, sir, and a friend of his brought the ring home," and Claude had spoken without thinking of the name he had given.

But he saw that the commodore had become deadly pale, and he said:

"You are faint, sir, so let me aid you to retire so you can rest."

"No, ring for brandy and remain with me—I wish to talk with you."

"As Claude obeyed he muttered:

"Great God! it is his son. It is the young buccaneer himself."

"What shall I do?"

The brandy came and the commodore revived, and said:

"Now, Mr. Searle, where is your ship?"

"I have none, sir."

"Indeed! and what are you doing?"

"I am ashore in hard luck at present, sir," was the bitter response.

The commodore was silent a moment, but he mused to himself:

"The boy has changed his name because he found it a curse to him."

"I can help him, and I must get him out of the way."

CHAPTER LIX.

AN OFFER ACCEPTED.

"MR. SEARLE, you must know, after the service you have rendered me, that I feel the deepest interest in you."

"I thank you, sir."

"You must not consider that I am trying to pry into your affairs, but you are a sailor, therefore there is a bond between us, and an expression upon your face shows that you are not happy."

"Now will you take a berth on board my flag-ship?"

"No, no, sir, oh, no!" quickly said Claude.

"I thought so," muttered the commodore.

"Well, I must ask you frankly, if you are not in trouble?"

"I am, sir."

"You want a good paying berth of some kind."

"I am forced to confess that I do, sir, though I do not wish to trade upon my having been of service to you," and Claude mused:

"He does not know me, of course, or suspect, so I can accept a berth from him. I must do it for my poor mother's and sister's sakes."

"You are not trading upon your service to me, sir, for I have a place I wish a good man for, and if you can take it so much the better."

"I cannot go aboard a vessel-of-war, sir."

"This is service ashore."

"Ah!"

"Yes, I have an estate up in Maine, situated upon the coast."

"I bought it some years ago from a brother officer, and though it should pay me largely, it does not bring in expenses, owing to the lax management of my overseer."

"I discharged him when in port, six weeks ago, and intended to look up another man to-morrow to place in charge."

"There is a grand old stone mansion upon the grounds, overlooking the sea, several thousands of acres, outbuildings, stock and all necessary for a fine estate, and I wish you would go there and manage it for me."

"I know nothing about such work, I may say, though I did act as overseer of a place in South America once."

"Then you will soon learn what is needed on my place."

"I will pay you a good salary, and if you have a family so much the better, for you will have a good living on the place, while you shall have a percentage on the income realized."

"Now what do you say, Mr. Searle?"

"Commodore Searle, I will frankly say to you that your offer is a God-send, for I had come to the end of my purse, and my mother is ill and the doctor has said she must have quiet and a total change of scene and air."

"Then you will accept my offer, Mr. Searle?"

"I will gladly do so, sir."

"Then dine with me here to-morrow and we will talk over all arrangements, and I am the more pleased as you will have your mother with you."

"And my sister, sir."

"Yes, yes, it will be the better, for they can help you greatly, so that I will gladly pay the expenses of all to your destination."

"There are horses there, a yacht, boats and all to make you most comfortable, while let me say if you are fond of adventure there is a band of smugglers there on the coast whom you might hunt down."

"But come in to-morrow and we'll talk it all over."

"I thank you, sir, again and again, and I trust you will feel no ill effects from your wound," and with this Claude Cassiday departed for his home with a glad heart.

His sister was waiting up for him, his mother was awake still, and he made known to them the good news, adding:

"Now as Claude Cassiday I would never been so fortunate, so mother you are Mrs. Searle now, and its Helen and Claude Searle—at least until the day when I can clear from the name of Cassiday the stain now resting upon it."

Mrs. Cassiday was more than delighted with the plan, for she felt that her son would be with her constantly, the change would greatly benefit her, and then they would be far away from those who knew them, for she knew all that Claude had suffered.

The next morning she expressed herself as feeling like a new woman, yet said:

"It seems too good to be true, Claude."

"We will hope for the best, mother, and will know this evening," was the answer.

Just on time Claude presented himself at the room of Commodore Hartwell, and he found that he was expected.

The commodore said that his arm was sore, but he would soon be all right and would go aboard ship on the morrow.

Then dinner was served in the room, after which the two settled down to business.

The commodore had a map of the estate, plans of the mansion and buildings, and full instructions for the young sailor.

"He had found out, he said, that a passenger brig was to sail for the Kennebec on the morrow, and from there a small coaster could be chartered to carry them to the estate."

He had drawn from the bank considerably more than the expenses needed, but there might be some needs for the money on the estate, and then he told Claude to pay himself out of the revenues coming in and bank the balance, making quarterly reports which he was to mail to him to his home in Boston.

Again and again did Claude thank the commodore, inwardly congratulating himself that he was unknown to him.

Armed with his papers and instructions, and ample funds, Claude bade farewell to Commodore Hartwell and went down to the brig to secure pleasant quarters for his invalid mother and sister, and to find the time of sailing.

He found the brig a pleasant craft, and to his delight they were the only passengers booked for the voyage.

Then he returned home and told the good news, and at once all was busy preparation packing up.

The next day the brig sailed, and on her deck sat Mrs. Cassiday, her son and daughter near her.

But the eyes of Claude Cassiday were upon the vessel-of-war as they passed her at anchor, and his brow darkened as he saw on her deck in the uniform of a lieutenant one whom he knew had been his bitterest foe—Buck Bracket.

CHAPTER LX.

THE SMUGGLER CAPTAIN.

THE supposed planter, who was known as Kenton of the yacht Dreadnaught, disappeared suddenly from the hotel in Boston where he was staying.

It was said that he had sold his yacht, for she was still in the harbor, and had gone overland by coach back to his home.

As a corroboration of this the name of Claude Kenton appeared upon the stage books, his fare paid to New York.

Then there came a rumor that the new yacht built in the port had been sold as a trading vessel for the West Indies, and it was certain that she had left the harbor, sailing by night.

The builders had received their pay for her, but were not at liberty to say who the purchaser was.

A few days after the story came out that it was the planter who had bought the three-master, and that he had only gone to New York to meet his negro crew who were coming on by stage.

Then came word, from some mysterious quarter that the new craft had run to New York, gotten her crew and the captain, and that very night had been seized by pirates and all on board murdered.

No one could get at the truth of this rumor, but certain it was that the planter had disappeared, the three-master was also gone and the yacht Dreadnaught was still in the harbor and had been purchased by Moses Gripstein for a coaster, running between Portsmouth, Boston and Newport.

As with all else that the wise-headed Hebrew money-lender touched it was agreed that his new purchase would coin money for him.

But the reader knows the inner situation of affairs, and is aware that the three-masted vessel sailed under the command of the buccaneer Kent who was to develop into a smuggler.

He had obtained a crew, from Gripstein's agents, and with his own few men, whom he intended making his officers, had sailed for the scene of his smuggling operations.

With the example before them of a vessel captured and their captain hanged, the smugglers of the coast had dropped their lawless acts for the time being and settled down to hard work as fishermen at a hamlet upon a bay on the coast of Maine.

They had their secret retreat, and rendezvous, but for the present were more than willing to attract no attention to themselves.

In their retreat, or depot of supplies, were stored a large quantity of goods which had never paid duty; but there they must remain until the clouds had rolled by, or in other words until the officers of the law had become sure that the hanging of the smuggler chief had broken up the band.

At the retreat was one of the under officers of the band in charge of the booty and four men who were with him.

At the fishing hamlet was another officer with six men, and these two were aspirants for leadership when the band again began work.

This last named was in possession of the vessel, a sloop belonging to the band, and the aforementioned held the retreat and the booty.

These twelve were all who were left of the band, the chief having been hanged and half a score of his followers sent to prison for a long term of years.

When the Evil Spirit sailed from Boston she headed for a secret retreat marked on the

chart which Gripstein had given to Captain Kent.

Having dropped anchor there in a place so secluded that there was no danger of her being found, her commander sent a boat to the hamlet, telling the officer in charge there to report on board with his men.

He sent another boat to the retreat ordering the keeper there and his men to report at the rendezvous on a certain day.

Then he awaited events.

Neither of the two officers knew that the order to the two others had been sent, and naturally each supposed that their secret chief, whoever he might be, had sent for him to come and reorganize the band, he being captain, and they so stated to their men.

The messengers whom Kent sent were two of his own crew, who had escaped from southern prisons with him.

He knew that he could trust them, and they went in boats belonging to the Evil Spirit, fitted with oars and sails, and each had a companion.

They were to do no more than give the orders to the two officers and return.

They returned the next day reporting that they had seen the two officers, delivered their orders and that they would arrive on the specified day, Kent having given them several days leeway.

Two days after the return of the messengers the lookout ashore on the rocks, above the vessel, signaled a boat in sight.

Captain Kent was ready to receive his visitors, and had visible on deck just six men besides himself.

But there were below decks sixteen whose presence naturally would not be suspected.

The boat in sight was a large whale-boat with two stump masts and was coming along at a lively pace.

In it were five men. Soon after the lookout signalled, "a sloop in sight, coming from in-shore among the islands."

Upon the sloop were seven men.

So the two smuggler officers and their respective followers were in sight, coming to meet their new captain, although they did not suspect this fact.

CHAPTER LXI.

A TRIO OF CAPTAINS.

THE whale-boat, which had come along the coast, was the first to run in through the rock-guarded channel into what was known to the smugglers as Blind Bay, for few suspected the existence of a good harborage where only land appeared to be from seaward, and where ashore the approach to was so wild and barren no one ever went near the coast at that point.

To the band of smugglers then alone was the existence of Blind Bay known.

The Evil Spirit was snugly anchored close in-shore with lofty, overhanging rocks, and an inlet penetrating beyond up which she could be towed for a mile or more, and where one would not have deemed it possible for a small boat even to go.

Upon a lofty point of rocks above, the lookout was stationed, and he could command a view up and down the coast for leagues, without being himself seen.

The whale-boat came in well, and, lowering sail, as the wind left her from the overhanging rocks, she took to her oars.

When she rounded the woodland that revealed the beautiful little vessel, all on board were evidently surprised, and their leader was tappy in the thought that he was to be the commander of such a craft.

He came alongside and was welcomed by Kent, who wore sailor garb only, and invited him into the cabin, while he said:

"This schooner is here, sir, by order of our agent, to be placed under the new captain of the band."

"Yes, yes. I am to be the captain, you know."

"No; I did not know," dryly said Kent, and he added:

"But here comes the sloop."

"You sent for Dudley too, then?"

"Oh, yes, sir; we wanted all of the band."

"Well, he may feel sore that he is not to be captain, but then, of course, he will be second in command—yes, I will make him my first officer."

"You are very kind," said Kent, and after ushering Officer Lindsey into the cabin, he returned on deck to greet Mr. Dudley.

The whale-boat men had gotten upon deck, and their boat had been dropped astern, so that the sloop came slowly alongside of the Evil Spirit.

Kent met Officer Dudley at the gangway, and said to him:

"My name is Brandt, sir, and I was sent out with the new crew, by order of the Secret Commander."

"Yes, I have been expecting a vessel to be sent me, so that I could begin operations again, as the season is opening now when we should be at work."

"This is certainly a superb craft, and she looks speedy."

"She is a fast sailer, sir; but will you walk into the cabin?"

"Yes, and I can look my craft over at my leisure, for I suppose you have papers for me to read and sign, my man?"

"Yes, sir."

"I saw Lindsey's whaleboat ahead of me?"

"Yes, sir, there she is, and Mr. Lindsey is in the cabin."

"Well, it will be a disappointment to him not to be captain, but then I will make him my next in rank."

"That's what he said about you, sir," quietly remarked Kent.

"What! does he dare suppose that he will be put over me?"

"He does seem to have that idea in his silly head: but come in, sir."

Officer Dudley obeyed and Kent saw that there was no need to introduce the two gentlemen, for they were at sword's points as rivals, and bowed to each other very coldly.

"Gentlemen, I have some papers here to read, and as they interest the whole band I propose that we go on deck," said Kent.

The two rivals bowed and the crews were called, of the Evil Spirit, the sloop and the whale-boat.

Then Kent said quietly:

"I desire to read aloud the instructions under which I am acting."

"This beautiful vessel has been purchased to be used as a smuggler, and the band of Coast Smugglers will be reorganized under a new captain, the last having been captured and hanged."

"As a number of the band, captured with your late captain, are now in prison, other good men have been shipped, and the Smugglers of the Coast will be strong enough to protect themselves, and to win a fortune for themselves."

"Now, the first thing to be done is to let you know who your leader is to be."

"Of course, and I am sure my men will have the confidence to follow my lead," said Officer Lindsey.

"Your lead? Why I am to be captain of this band, that is well understood," cried Officer Dudley.

Each faced the other threateningly, and their respective followers dropped their hands upon their weapons.

But Kent spoke up here:

"Do both of you gentlemen claim the captaincy?"

"I do."

"I am captain."

"And your followers will back up your claims?"

Each force cheered, though the four men of Lindsey looked a trifle uneasy as to their numbers compared to Dudley's crew.

"Well, gentlemen, these orders I here hold refer to another person as captain."

"This is infamous!"

"I will not yield my claim," came the response.

"As I said—these orders are for another person to be captain, and you are not named in them as such, either of you."

"But I will be!"

"I will be!"

"It seems that you are both determined to be the leader, and it appears that your respective followers are ready to fight for your claims; but, would it not be well to learn just who is the one to whom these orders refer?"

"Who is he?" cried Lindsey.

"I don't care who he is, for I shall not yield my claim," Dudley shouted.

"The last captain, you remember, was hanged."

"He was a pirate."

"We must take our chances on hanging."

"But you will let me tell you who this leader is whom the secret chief, who has his property at stake, has selected?" quietly urged Kent.

"I don't care; let us hear."

"Yes, tell us who he is?"

"I have the honor to be the one chosen as your leader," was Kent's cool response, and a deathlike silence fell upon the group gathered on the deck of the Evil Spirit.

CHAPTER LXII. A BOLD CHALLENGE.

In spite of their pretensions, the two smuggler officers were slightly taken aback at the discovery of who the man was that they were to regard as chief.

There was that about the dark-faced, quiet man that showed an innate power of which he was conscious.

At first they had regarded him as the sailing-master sent to bring them the vessel.

That he was going to lay claim to the leadership had not entered their heads.

That any one outside of the band was to be captain they had not dreamed of for an instant. "Permit me to read these instructions," said Kent, smiling.

"Instructions or no instructions, I will be captain here!" cried Lindsey.

"No, never! I will not yield my claim."

"Will you not first hear the orders, and then you can decide what is best?"

"Fire away, then."

"Yes, read them, but my mind's made up as to my course."

Then Kent read aloud the orders of the "Unknown Chief," whom the reader knows as Moses Gripstein.

They were to the effect that since the hanging of the former captain, and imprisonment of a number of his men, the band of smugglers had become demoralized, and so had been allowed to remain idle, though under pay the while for half a year.

The chances for making money from smuggling goods into the country were now very great, and the Unknown Chief had decided to set the band in motion again.

Arrangements had been consummated with certain captains of foreign incoming vessels to turn over rich imported goods at given points, which would be placed in the hands of the smugglers.

A coasting vessel had been secured to take certain freights, which, no matter what marked, or how put up, would be goods dodging duties, and they would be delivered to the proper agents for sale.

Then the "orders" went on to say:

"But there must be an active head to all this, one who is willing to share all risks, to face all dangers, and who is capable of commanding men."

"Such a one the Unknown Chief has been so fortunate as to find in the person who will read these instructions to the members of the band assembling under his call."

"It was also necessary to have a suitable craft, and one has been built at large expense, and her speed will set at defiance the fleetest of cruisers, while she will have a large crew both for work and protection."

"The active commander, therefore, of the Band of Smugglers, I name now to be Captain Brandt, and you will one and all obey him accordingly."

"THE UNKNOWN CHIEF."

A deep silence was upon all while these instructions were being read, and as Kent finished he said pleasantly:

"Now, gentlemen, I beg to present myself to you as Captain Brandt; but as there are now, it seems, a trio of captains, I have a plan to propose which I trust you will listen to in patience, and by it we will decide who is to be the leader."

"I wish to hear no plan, for I am captain here."

"What say you men?" cried Dudley.

"Ay, ay," came in chorus from his followers.

"No, I will lead!"

"Will you not stand by me, men?"

"We will," came in voices of the four men.

Kent was serene, and said in a voice that all heard:

"As you appeal to your men, I shall demand that you hear my plan, and so call upon my men. Ho, Evil Spirits! On deck!" and with Kent's command the crew rushed on deck with a promptitude that amazed the rival captains and their men.

This sudden move caused the two rivals to gaze in anxiety toward their small crews.

With the men he had on the vessel's deck and those who had come at his call from below decks, there was no doubt but that Kent had the call.

He was master of the situation.

But he did not gloat over the fact and simply said:

"Now, gentlemen, as I have the power behind me it will prevent bother, and I desire to ask you to hear my plan for deciding who is to be chief here."

"I'll hear you, but you force yourself upon us," said Dudley.

"Yes, you entrapped us."

"Oh no, I did nothing of the kind; but I wish you to hear the plan I propose, and if you are not cowards you will agree to it, while I am sure the crew, your own as well as mine, will consider it a fair way of settling this dispute and securing a leader who has the courage of his opinions."

"What is your plan then?"

"Will you abide by it, Mr. Dudley?"

"If my men say yes I will."

"And you, Mr. Lindsey, do you abide by it?"

"I'll leave it to my men to decide."

Turning to Lindsey's men Kent asked: "Men, do you decide for your captain that he shall stand by the result of my plan to select a leader, if his chances are to be as fair as mine?"

"We do."

"And you, men, will so decide in favor of my plan to select a captain, if your leader's chance is the same as my own?" he asked of Dudley's men.

"We will!" was the response.

"And you do the same, my lads?" he demanded, turning to his own crew.

"Ay ay, sir," came in a chorus.

"Then, men, I propose to fight those two claimants for leadership of this band of sea brigands, and the survivor shall be chief," came the startling proposition from Kent.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE DOUBLE DUEL.

THE remarkable challenge of Kent was a great surprise to the rival captains; but they

had committed themselves, what could they do but accept?

Regarding the effect of his challenge for a moment, he saw that he had won with the men, both the crews of Dudley and Lindsey.

"Now, gentlemen, as this is decided, there is no need of delay, so we will get the affair over with as soon as possible," Kent announced. "Of course, as the challenged parties, it is for you to decide upon weapons, so name your choice."

"Is this to be a duel to the death, or simply for mastery?" asked Lindsey.

"To the death of course, for a defeated rival is simply an enemy in camp, ready to strike an assassin's blow at any minute," was Kent's emphatic answer.

"Very well. My choice is rapiers," said Lindsey, who was known to be a splendid hand with a blade.

"And I choose pistols," said Dudley, whose skill with firearms was well known in the band.

"The weapons suit me, gentlemen, so decide who shall be first," coolly said Kent.

"I yield to Mr. Lindsey," said Dudley, who knew that a sword combat would doubtless prevent Kent from holding a steady hand, should he be a good shot.

Lindsey bowed, as accepting the first duel, and swords were brought from the cabin.

"Take your choice, sir, and you will find them splendid weapons," said Kent.

Lindsey selected one, the two men took position across the deck, and at the word, given by Dudley, the blades crossed.

It was so sudden that no one could explain how it was done; but in an instant almost the sword of Kent had been driven to the hilt in the body of his adversary, who, with a moan, sunk dead upon the deck.

As there had been no desperate sword combat to try his muscle, Dudley turned pale at what he beheld.

But he argued to himself that such a deadly swordsman could not also be a deadly shot, and he took his position across the deck of the Evil Spirit, standing against the bulwark to port.

Pistols had been brought from the cabin, and each man loaded his own weapon and adjusted the flint and powder in the pan.

There lay Lindsey dead, midway between the two, so Kent called to one of Dudley's men to give the word.

The man did so, and the pistols flashed.

But Dudley dropped dead, a bullet in the center of his forehead, while the ball from his pistol buried itself in the starboard bulwark close to the left side of Kent.

"Men, am I captain here?" asked Kent, coolly, and the wild cheers of all, given with the greatest good-will, answered him.

And so he became known as Captain Brandt, the Smuggler.

CHAPTER LXIV.

THE THREE EXILES.

SOME months have passed since the sailing of Claude Cassiday, his mother and sister, from New York, and bound to the estate of Commodore Hartwell upon the coast of Maine.

Mrs. Cassiday gained strength with each day at sea, and when she was placed on board of a small coasting craft, hailed by the packet, she was as well as ever she said.

The coaster traded along the shores of New England, and her skipper was very glad to make a few extra dollars by landing the three passengers at a certain point on the coast, as it would not take him very far out of his way.

As they approached their future home the three "exiles," for such Commodore Hartwell had intended they should be, watched the rock-bound shores with the deepest interest.

They beheld upon a cliff a large stone mansion with turrets and wings, which gave it the look of a lordly castle.

It overlooked a bay in which the little vessel found a harbor, and to one side was a stream deep and bordered with heavy timbers.

The people on the estate saw the vessel coming in, and expecting a visit from the master, for the late manager had been discharged some time before, they met the new comers at the landing.

Claude presented his orders from the commodore, and they were received cordially by the farm-hands and taken at once up to the old mansion.

"What a grand place," Helen had said.

"I think that you will entirely regain your health here, mother."

"Yes, Claude, we will be very happy, for it is an abiding place, where we can escape from the world."

"And that is what I wish, at least for the present, until I can get a new grip on life, and am in a position to face the world as I can wish," Claude answered.

"The people seem so kind to us," Helen remarked.

They selected their rooms in one end of the large mansion, overlooking the sea, and a servant to look after their wants was soon found and installed in the spacious kitchen.

There were vehicles in the barn, plenty of horses, and some score of people upon the farm,

with a few fishers dwelling in a hamlet on the coast property belonging to the estate.

Claude at once made himself popular with all, and Mrs. Cassidy and Helen won the hearts of every one connected with the estate.

There was a yacht at anchor in the river, and Claude felt that they could be almost happy there, and they all thanked the commodore over and over again, little dreaming that he had been anxious to exile them there, so that Claude could never recognize him as the one he had known in the past under an assumed name when searching for the treasure left as a legacy by his, Claude's, father, and which Mrs. Hartwell had secured.

Neighbors they had none, the nearest village being ten miles away, and only a few scattering farms here and there.

The house had been originally built by a French nobleman, an exile from France, and his descendants had been glad to dispose of it to the commodore, who, purchasing other lands near, had intended making it an abiding-place in his old age, a toy to occupy his time with when his daughter Celeste should have married and left him.

Such was "The Hermitage," as its exiled builder had named it, and which had become the home of a trio more of exiles.

The place was elegantly furnished, all was there that want could wish, and, notwithstanding the stories that many a tragedy had been executed beneath its roof, that it had been long the resort of smugglers and pirates, when deserted by its owners, and that it was full of ghastly forms and spooks, the three who had gone there to dwell were content.

There were stories told of smuggler haunts near, and robber retreats, but this seemed only rumor.

Still, Claude was not long in getting himself a crew for the yacht, and in organizing the help of the estate into a force which he could use if need be.

He sailed over the adjacent waters in the yacht, and in small sail-boats alone, rode all over the country, hunted through the hills and valleys, and in a few months came to know the country and the waters perfectly.

Such was the home to which the Cassidays had gone, and though the world wondered what had become of them, they at least were content to have things as they were.

CHAPTER LXV.

WO-TON-KA'S LAMENT.

MOSES GRIPSTEIN sat in his private office one morning, devoting half an hour, as was his custom, to the reading of the morning paper, which he always read at night; after which he was wont to count up his gains for the day.

Suddenly his eyes fell upon something which startled him.

Since the departure of Captain Kent to take command of the band of smugglers, matters had gone well with Mr. Gripstein.

Kent had begun to win a name as a daring smuggler, becoming known as Black Brandt.

He had sent in booty sufficient to please even exacting Moses Gripstein, and not a shadow of suspicion had fallen upon any one upon whom the hand of the law could be placed.

But what now startled him he read in large type:

"BLACK BRANDT'S DOOM!"

"THE EVIL SPIRIT LOST WITH ALL ON BOARD!"

"We learn from Commodore Hartwell, who has just arrived in port, that he has news of the loss of the famous smuggler Black Brandt, and his wonderful vessel the Evil Spirit.

"It seems that the manager of the commodore's estate on the Coast of Maine, is a young man, once a sailor, by the name of Searle, and being of an adventurous spirit, he sought to get the reward offered for Black Brandt.

"So he got a crew of Maine fishermen together, drilled them well and started in pursuit of the Evil Spirit.

"He was in chase of the vessel by night, when a terrific storm suddenly swept up from the ocean, threw the craft of Captain Searle over on its beam-ends and swept overboard several of his crew, while he was forced to cut away his masts and drop both anchors to prevent driving ashore against a rocky cliff.

"But fortunately, though roughly handled the pursuers saw the Evil Spirit more so, for she was stripped of her sails and driven against the cliff with a force that must have made kindling wood of her in an instant and caused the sudden death of every man on board.

"When the dawn came, the storm ended, and the jury-masts were rigged on the yacht, so that she was enabled to reach her haven many leagues down the coast.

"Such is the report of Captain Searle, and our readers will be glad to learn of the doom of the noted smuggler craft and her crew."

When Moses Gripstein finished reading this notice he uttered a groan and dropped his face in his hands, while he gasped:

"So mooch monish gone, and Kent too, dat vas to makes me more."

His words were heard by Zophiel and springing forward she seized the paper and fairly devoured the account of the loss of the Evil Spirit.

Her face was deadly pale, but she was strangely calm as she said:

"Father, I know now that black bandit was

the one who called here to see you several times months ago.

"I know too that he was once known as Kent the Buccaneer.

"But for all that I loved him with my whole soul, and I had hoped to redeem him some day from his evil life.

"But he is dead, and perhaps it was better so, for now I can love him.

"Yes, he is dead, and so let it be; but I will never cease to love his memory, and no other man can ever claim my heart."

She turned and walked away leaving her uncle in a daze of amazement.

After awhile he muttered:

"If my child lof him, I was glad he was dead, so glad.

"And I guess I gif up dis pad pizziness, now, for maybe I get into troubles someday.

"Yes, I gif it up."

And in another home the same account was read and, strange to say, brought sorrow.

That was in the home of Wo-ton-ka, the Witch.

She had read the paper in the morning, and from her lips came a little wail.

"Dead! dead! and I loved him so! I loved him so.

"He never recognized in me the little girl who was in the Gypsy camp he was wont to visit, and who told him she was a captive of the wandering people.

"He promised to come some day and steal me away; but he never came, no he never came.

"But I loved him still, and his image engraved on my heart is yet there.

"No change could he make that I did not know him and I would have given my riches all to have won his love.

"I intended to tell him some day who I was, and to offer him my wealth for his love, if he would give up his wild, sinful life, and become a changed man.

"My amulet did not save him; no, he perished with it about his neck, and he has no grave for me to visit and shed tears of sorrow for my lost loved one.

"I will ever stay by the sea, for it is his grave, and watching its billows I will feel that he speaks to me in the murmuring waves.

"Yes, he is lost to me, forever; but, Wo-ton-ka must still be the Witch, the Woman of Mystery, until her eyes close in death."

Such was the wail of the poor woman, and it came from her innocent heart, for wicked as he had been, ever, she loved the man whose name was blackened with the infamy of piracy—loved him, even as Zophiel the Jewess did, and who in her heart nursed her idolatry for one whose whole life had been at war with his fellow-men.

But, then, who can fathom the heart of a woman?

CONCLUSION.

LONG years have passed since the stirring scenes of old, when black flags floated over armed decks, and we look back upon that strange past as upon a dream.

But to-day there are descendants living of those who have figured in these pages, and they recall, with pain or pride, the deeds of their ancestors.

Dwelling upon the coast of Maine are the descendants of Claude Cassidy, and happy are they that their gallant ancestor was able, at last, to cast into the teeth of his accusers and defamers, the charge that he had done a dishonest deed—had robbed a poor woman, and broken his pledge to a dying man; and, proving his innocence, had won and wedded beautiful Celeste Hartwell.

Celeste had deeply sorrowed to learn at last the bitter story of her father's sin against Claude; but when the grave closed over the old commodore, his sins, unknown to the world, the mantle of forgiveness was drawn and the gallant deeds of his earlier years alone were remembered.

So let us forgive the wrongs of a century ago, and remember our forefathers, one and all, only as heroes, out of whose bravery and troubled lives came this noble inheritance of a country of which all mankind may well be proud.

THE END.

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